

¹⁷ So when Jesus came, He found that [Lazarus] had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. ¹⁹ And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. ²⁰ Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹ Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

John 11:17-27 A 5/14/17 Jeremiah 15:15-21 1 Peter 5:6-11 Psalm 121 Resp. Psalm 126
Hymns: 206 (1-4, 7-8), 192 (1, 3, 6-8), 732, 47

GOD KNOWS WHAT'S BEST FOR US

- 1. He cares about us**
- 2. He knows what we need**
- 3. He helps us in His own way and in His own time**
- 4. He has given us the greatest blessing in Jesus**

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

When bad things happen to us or someone we love, is it enough to simply say that God knows what's best for us? Does that really answer our questions about how God feels about us to let such a thing happen, about why God let such a thing happen, and about why God sometimes doesn't answer us when we want Him to and in the way we want Him to? We know God is going to take us to heaven some day, but what about the help and comfort we need for our lives now?

– 1 –

As our text begins, we learn that Jesus' friend, Lazarus, had died four days earlier. Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, had sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick. They wanted Jesus to come and heal him. But Jesus hadn't come, and Lazarus had died. It wasn't because Jesus didn't care. He cared very much. Before our text we're told, "*Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus*" (v. 5). God tells us in His Word, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love*" (Jer. 31:3). "*Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands*" (Is. 49:15-16a). It was because Jesus cared about Mary and Martha that He went to comfort them over their brother's death. After our text when Jesus saw their deep sorrow and the sorrow of those who had come to offer them comfort we're told, "*Jesus wept*" (v. 35). Jesus knows when we're hurting. He loves us and cares so very much about us.

– 2 –

We're told, "*Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him.*" Martha came to talk to Jesus about what was on her heart and mind. The Bible says, "*Your [heavenly] Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him*" (Mt. 6:8). Jesus didn't need

Martha to tell Him what she was going through. He already knew. Jesus also knew that Martha needed to talk to Him about it. When something is troubling us, when our heart is heavy, Jesus wants us to come to Him in prayer and talk to Him about it. He has told us, *“The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out”* (Jn. 6:37). Jesus doesn’t just let us ‘get it off our chest,’ He also gives us the help we need. *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden”* Jesus invites us, *“and I will give you rest”* (Mt. 11:28).

Martha tells Jesus, *“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”* (Later, her sister Mary told Jesus the same thing [v. 32].) Martha adds, *“But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”* Like everyone else, Martha knew about Jesus’ great miracles. She knew that Jesus has the power to heal anyone of anything, and could have healed her brother. She tells Jesus in effect that had He come earlier when she and Mary had first sent word to Him about Lazarus, and healed him, her brother would still be alive. What Martha said was true. She was being honest with Jesus in telling Him what she was struggling with. At the same time, she and Mary were looking at things from their human perspective. As God, Jesus has a different perspective. He was helping Martha and Mary learn that while it’s good for us to tell Him what we’re struggling with and ask Him to help us, we need to leave everything in His hands. Jesus knows what we need.

– 3 –

When Jesus had first received word that Lazarus was sick He told His disciples, *“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it. ... So, when He heard that [Lazarus] was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. ... Then Jesus said to [His disciples], ‘Lazarus is dead.’ And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him”* (v. 4). Jesus purposely stayed where He was until He knew Lazarus had died. He would still heal Lazarus, but it would be in His own way and in His own time. Jesus was not uncaring toward Mary and Martha and Lazarus. He knew what was best not only for them, but for everyone else.

The Lord asks us in His Word, *“Why do you say...: ‘My way is hidden from the LORD, and my just claim is passed over by my God’?”* (Is. 40:27). Sometimes it seems that God isn’t answering our prayers. Sometimes the way God answers our prayers is not at all the way we want Him to. At such times we need to remind ourselves that, as the Bible says, *“God is love”* (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). God loves us, and everything He does for us He does in love. *“Be still,”* He tells us, *“and know that I am God”* (Ps. 46:10a). God knows what’s best for us, and that’s what He’s going to do for us. We need to ask Him to help us to trust in Him and accept His will, **whatever** His will may be. That’s why He teaches us to pray, *“Thy will be done”* (Lk. 11:2). *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”* (Ro. 8:28, NASB).

Jesus tells Martha, *“Your brother will rise again. Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’”* Martha was thinking about Lazarus rising from the dead on the Judgment Day. But Jesus was telling her that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead there and then. Jesus had come, not only to comfort Martha and Mary, but also to bring Lazarus back to life. Martha and Mary had wanted Jesus to heal Lazarus so he wouldn’t die.

Although Jesus' way was harder on them at first, they would get the healing for their brother they had wanted from Jesus, and so much more!

– 4 –

Jesus tells Martha, *“I am the resurrection and the life.”* Jesus Christ is almighty God with the power to bring the dead back to life and let them live forever! Jesus says literally from the original, *“I Myself am the resurrection and the life.”* The **only** way to eternal life in heaven is through Jesus Christ. Jesus says in another place, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (Jn. 14:6). Jesus tells Martha, *“He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die;”* from the original text: *“shall never die eternally.”* *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (Jn. 3:16). Jesus paid for all of our sins with His death on the cross, and rose again. Just by believing in Jesus our sins are all forgiven, we're saved, and we will live forever in heaven!

Jesus asks Martha, *“Do you believe this?”* Martha tells Jesus, *“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”* **That's** saving faith: to place our trust for the forgiveness of our sins and eternal salvation in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and only Savior of the world. By the grace of God Martha had such faith, and so do you and I. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* – Ephesians 2:8-9.

God has given us the greatest blessing in sending us Jesus to be our Savior, and giving us the faith to believe in Jesus and be saved. This is the greatest proof that God knows what's best for us. When you're going through times that try your soul, when it seems as if God isn't answering your prayers, when God's answer to your prayers is not what you wanted, remember that God has already given you the greatest blessing of all – the one thing you truly need – in Jesus.

The story of the death of Lazarus has a glorious ending. After our text we're told that Jesus went to Lazarus' tomb. There, in front of Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha, of His disciples, and of everyone else Jesus had the stone rolled away that covered the tomb. Jesus then *“cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And he who had died came out”* of his tomb alive and healthy once more (vv. 38-44). In doing things His way Jesus healed Lazarus, turned Mary's and Martha's deep sorrow into great joy, and greatly strengthened their faith and the faith of His disciples. And we're told, *“Many of the Jews who had come ... and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him”* (v. 45).

Sometimes God does things and allows things to happen that we don't understand. It can be very hard on us. Whether we see it or not, God always has a purpose for what He does. God cares about us. God knows what we need. God helps us in His own way and in His own time. And God has given us the greatest blessing in Jesus, and eternal life in Him. Christian friends, **GOD KNOWS WHAT'S BEST FOR US.** Amen.