

When tragedy strikes: the God of all comfort (John 11:1–45)

1. Three responses to tragedy

Martha needed to understand — Jesus gave her new insight.

“Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask [...] he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.”

— John 11:21–22, 24.

“I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.”

— John 11:25.

Mary needed sympathy — Jesus wept with her.

“When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. “Where have you put him?” he asked them. They told him, “Lord, come and see.” Then Jesus wept.”

— John 11:33–35.

Lazarus was dead — Jesus gave him life.

“God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.”

— Ephesians 2:4–5.

2. Why did Jesus allow Lazarus to die at all?

“Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, I’m glad I wasn’t there, for now you will really believe.”

[...]

Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen.

— John 11:14, 45.

A bad thing is allowed to happen so that a better thing can happen, to the glory of God.

“Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”

“Yes,” Martha said, “he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day”.”

— John 11:23–24.

“Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength.”

— 1 Corinthians 15:42b–43.

3. We may know this, but not feel it

“Roll the stone aside”, Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man’s sister, protested, “Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.”

— John 11:39.

“Faith is holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods.”

— C. S. Lewis.