

JESUS, OUR REDEEMING FRIEND

John 11:17-36

The raising of Lazarus from the grave is the seventh miraculous sign recorded in the Gospel of John. These seven miracles of Christ gloriously display the beauty of the heart of Jesus, a heart which lovingly ministers to people in all seasons of life. Jesus' ministering heart is best exemplified as He confronted one of the saddest tragedies that could beset any family: the pain of losing someone to death. As we revisit the account of Jesus' ministry to Lazarus' family, we will be instructed concerning Jesus as our Redeeming Friend.

1. *Jesus shares the comforting truth of* _____.

Martha, struck with grief over the death of her brother Lazarus, expressed her deepest agony by telling Jesus, "*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died*" (John 11:17-21). These words reflect a kind of half-hearted faith which attempts to limit God and treat His promise impersonally (John 11:22-24). Jesus, in response to Martha's flickering hope, comforted her with His glorious promise: "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die*" (John 11:25-26). This divine promise comforts us in three ways: (a) Because *Christ is the resurrection*, physical death for a Christian becomes a blessed bridge to an eternal life with God in heaven (Daniel 12:2; John 5:27-29; 6:40; 1 Thess. 4:13-14) (b) Because *Christ is Life*, a Christian will never suffer eternal death which is the horrible separation from God in endless punishment and torment in hell (Matthew 10:28; Revelation 21:8) (c) Because *Christ is 'I am'*, the power of His promise in our individual life is timeless and limitless (Ephesians 2:1-7; Romans 6:4).

2. *Jesus sheds the tears of* _____.

Mary, suffering with the same heaviness of heart, approached Jesus with the exact words that her sister Martha conveyed to her Master, "*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died*" (John 11:32). With Martha, Jesus offered the ministry of truth. But with Mary, Jesus reached out with the ministry of tears (John 11:33-36). Because of His redeeming love for His beloved friends, Jesus shed the tears of pure compassion, tears of holy rage and tears of sacrificial love and grace (John 15:13; 11:48-53).

Closing Reflection:

"*Greater love has no one than this that someone would lay his life for a friend*" (John 15:13). Jesus, our Redeeming Friend, loves us that much that He fearlessly confronted death and conquered its power at the Cross so that we might forever enjoy His gift of eternal life!