

**Title:** **-S-** Is God Fair?

**Object:**

**Scripture:** "But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'" (Matthew 20:13-15)

**-S-** "It's not fair!" Have you ever said those words? Be honest, now! Maybe your brother or sister was invited to go to the movies with a friend and you weren't invited. What was the your reaction? "That's not fair! Why can't I go too?"

**-S-** When we say, "It's not fair!" **-S-** it usually means that something is not going our way or we want something that someone else has.

In our Bible lesson today, Jesus told a story about a landowner who was hiring men to work in his vineyard. **-S-** He hired some of them early in the morning, some in the middle of the day, and some he hired just before quitting time.

**-S-** When it was time to pay the workers, he paid them all the same. Can you guess what the workers who were hired early in the morning said? Your right, they cried out, "Hey! That's not fair! You paid the workers who worked only one hour the same as those of us who worked all day."

The owner of the vineyard said, "I am not being unfair to you. I paid you what I agreed to pay you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Are you jealous because I am generous?"

**-S-** The question for today is this: "Is God fair?" Of course He is! But do you know what else? The Bible tells us that He is more than fair, the Bible tells us that **-S-** "God's love is everlasting." Does God love us because we love him?" No, the Bible says, "This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins." Wow! That's not fair—that's love.

If we got what was fair, none of us would get to heaven. I'm glad that God doesn't give me what is fair, but gives me His love and grace, in spite of what I deserve!

Father, we thank You for loving us so much that You sent your Son to give us everlasting life. In His name we pray. Amen.

**READING – Proverbs 15:29**

**-S- The Seventh Miracle**

September 21, 2014

John 11:37-44

Sermon #64

Today we come to the third part of this wonderful story John wrote in chapter 11.

**-S-** Part one, Lazarus is ill. Martha and Mary send a messenger to Jesus. He waits two days to begin His journey to Bethany in order that the glory of God might be seen when He arrives. **-S-** Part two; we find Jesus has arrived outside of the village of Bethany. We observe both weak and strong faith. **-S-** Part three this morning we will study, the miracle for the glory of Jesus whom the Father had sent. **-S-** Part four, next week, is about the various responses and the aftermath of the miracle. This seventh and last great miracle recorded in the Book of John is also the longest, being 46 verses.

**-S-** The purpose of miracles is always to show the power and glory of God and Jesus whom He sent. **-S-** The first miracle recorded in the Gospel of John is the turning of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana and showed that Jesus was the source of joy and life lived in abundance. *“This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”* (John 2:11)

**-S-** In the second miracle Jesus healed the son of the nobleman because of his faith and the boy was healed from a distance by Jesus’ mere word. This miracle showed that Jesus had power over physical sickness brought into the world by sin. **-S-** The third, Jesus healed the crippled and ill man who had suffered for 38 years. This demonstrates the helpless state people are in because of sin and that their only hope is found in Christ alone. **-S-** The feeding of 5000 showed that Jesus is the *“bread of life”* and that people may eat from Him until they are spiritually satisfied.

**-S-** Jesus walked on the water demonstrating His power over nature. He showed the disciples that He is the safe harbor in the worst storms of life. **-S-** The sixth miracle, Jesus heals the man who was blind from birth. This man represented the spiritual blindness of mankind because of sin. Christ is the only One that brings light to a person's soul and spirit. Jesus prepared His disciples to understand that He is "the light of the world" in both chapters eight and nine so they would understand when He healed the blind man why He did so. The Apostle John wrote of these miracles because of the principles they taught about Christ. These miracles were far from the only miracles Jesus did – from the scriptures we know that there were many other miracles. John recorded the purpose for miracles by quoting Jesus, **-S-** "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me... **-S-** If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." (John 10:25, 37-38) This echoes the purpose statement of why John wrote his gospel account, "Many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31)

Having reviewed the purpose of miracles as recorded in the scriptures **-S-** we may now approach the seventh and greatest miracle recorded in John. This miracle was both a powerful sign and encouragement to Jesus' disciples and believers, but it was also a strong rebuke to the hard-hearted unbelieving Jews and their continued rejection of Him. **-S-** It is a picture of how people, who are dead in their sin, are raised from spiritual death and brought to spiritual life by Jesus calling them forth.

On the last Lord's Day and we ended with the last sentence of the last paragraph where some of the unbelieving Jews asked, **-S-** "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?" These people observed that Jesus loved Lazarus and shed tears, but **-S-** this statement shows both their lack of faith in Jesus as the Messiah and their belief that Jesus might be a prophet and was limited in what He could do. They remember that Jesus had opened the eyes of the blind man. **-S-** But the mourners are asking themselves, "If Jesus could heal the sick, why did He delay and wait until Lazarus was dead and beyond Jesus' power?" This doubt resulted in what John writes in verse 38, **-S-** "So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it." Jesus is **-S-** "deeply moved" indicates His frustration with these mourners who wailed without hope and the Jewish leaders who are there to oppose Him. These verses give the indication Jesus was NOT "deeply moved" or frustrated by Lazarus' death because He already knew the outcome. However, **-S-** these Jews had not the ability, because of their hard-hearts, to see what Jesus was about to do. **-S-** God continues to do miracles today. But, if one's heart is hardened and one's spiritual eyes are blind; one simply is not able to see what God is doing all around him. My brothers and sisters are we taking the time to look and seek? For if we do take the time and seek in faith we will see the miracles of Jesus this day. We will see miracles as startling as Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The only requirement is that you believe in and have faith in Jesus as the Christ.

Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus, but stayed a short distance away. Tombs of the wealthy were often either natural or man-made caves. **-S-** The Greek word used here is for a natural cave as opposed to the word meaning a man-made cave

craved out of rock found in Matthew, Hebrews and Revelation. The floor of the tomb was leveled and often shelves were craved into the sides to lay the bodies on. A large stone was rounded and rolled in front of the tomb to keep out animals and robbers. **-S-** Tombs were located outside of the towns to keep the living from being defiled by the dead.

**-S-** When Jesus ordered, “**Remove the stone**” it sent Martha, who had now joined Mary and the mourners, into a panic. She did not understand Jesus’ purpose and she shouts out, **-S-** “**Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been *dead four days.***” Remember since the Jews did not embalm, they used spices to mask the smell of the body decaying. After four days the removing of the stone would allow the stench of the decaying body to come flooding out. Maybe Martha thought Jesus wanted to take one last look as His friend, but this thought would have terrified Martha and would have made Jesus unclean being in the presence of the dead. Also, according to Jewish belief at the fourth day, death was irreversible, final and the soul had departed.

### **-S-** **Believing Is Seeing**

We use an expression **-S-** “Seeing is believing”, in fact Missouri is know as the “show me state.” Show me and then I will believe. Jesus turns this around, saying, **-S-** “**Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?**” (v.40) Jesus is saying **-S-** believing is seeing. Jesus’ response to Martha was meant to give her hope and as a gentle rebuke. How often, we too, have to be reminded of what the Lord and His Word has already taught us. Jesus is telling Martha – it is not about Lazarus, but it is about the glory of God the Father and Me as the Christ whom God has sent. Martha had just responded to Jesus in verse 27 saying,

**-S-** “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even He who comes into the world.*” Jesus reminds her of who He is and this makes His point that believing is seeing. For Martha and Mary, and all the unbelieving mourners wailing without hope, **-S-** if they wanted to see the glory of God they first had to believe. In the human world behavior is not always consistent with promises or vows. We want collateral before we loan someone money to ensure we are repaid. However, Jesus is saying believe first; He says this because He is not talking about trusting humans, but trusting God. God is always completely trustworthy. James Montgomery Boice wrote, **-S-** “Consequently, to believe in God is to put oneself in the place of blessing, from which one will certainly see all that is promised in due time.” Oh, **-S-** the crowd and the Jewish leaders would see the miracle Jesus is about to do, but only believers would understand the meaning of the miracle. Nothing has changed, it the same for us; God is doing miracles all around us, but **-S-** we will only see and understand by faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are given when we believe.

### **-S-** Prayer With Purpose

Having gently rebuked Martha and having given her hope, but she is not sure yet for what she has hope. Jesus commanded and the stone was removed, which was no easy feat. It took a number of men and they were now unclean having been exposed to the dead. This violated Jewish tradition and scripture as Moses instructed, **-S-** “No one shall defile himself for a *dead* person among his people...”  
(Leviticus 21:1) The crowd would be at attention as they observed this scene of men opening the tomb. With everyone watching **-S-** “Jesus raised His eyes, and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You

sent Me.’ ” (v. 41-42) Take notice from these verses here what our Lord did Himself, and what He commanded others do. **-S-** It is reminiscent of Elijah as he repaired the altar on Carmel, arranged the wood, cut the animal sacrifice, and placed the pieces on the arranged wood to be burned. **-S-** Elijah made the by-standers fill the surrounding trench with water so that no suspicion might arise of fire having been secretly applied to the wood (1 Kings 18:30–35). So too, here we observe our Lord Jesus making sure that the most skeptical see that without laying a hand on the stone that covered the mouth of the tomb of His friend, He could call him to life. **-S-** Jesus orders men to do what can be done by human hand, reserving to Himself what only God the Creator can do. Don't you just love it when something happens and no person can take the credit – all those present know it is a “God thing”, gee we could even say it was a miracle. C. S. Lewis said it this way, **-S-** “God seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate to His creatures. He commands us to do slowly and blunderingly what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye.” **-S-** Jesus orchestrates the events so that no one can claim He did anything but a miracle by the power of God; even those who opposed Jesus would not be able to dispute what was about to happen.

Jesus begins His prayer, **-S-** “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.” **-S-** Jesus is NOT asking the Father to raise Lazarus, but is giving Him thanks for what the Father had already heard and granted. Addressing God as Father went against all Jewish customs and norms, showing the intimate relationship He and God had. We understand that the prayer was not for the Father or for Jesus, but **-S-** He prayed for the benefit of those attending the mourning of Lazarus's death - “so that they may believe that You sent Me.” **-S-** When this miracle is completed, what choice would they have except to recognize that Jesus had performed a miracle



that only God had the power to perform? **-S-** Only God is the creator of life and the One who can take life. Here death is reversed – **-S-** unheard of - and impossible for anyone other than God.

### **-S-** Seeing the Power of God

When Jesus had prayed and gotten everyone's attention and having made the point that if they believed God had sent Jesus as the Messiah they would see a miracle, **-S-** "He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.' The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.' "

(v.43-44) **-S-** Jesus did not just call Lazarus out of the tomb, but He shouted so that all who were there could hear His command, capturing their complete attention.

The actual wording of Jesus' command was short and to the point, even terse. **-S-**

The Greek text literally reads, **-S-** "Lazarus! Here! Outside! **-S-** Jesus' "loud voice" was for those who were witnessing this miracle. **-S-** Lazarus would have responded even if Jesus had whispered. I would like you to notice that Jesus called Lazarus by name. Why do you think Jesus used Lazarus' name? How many dead people were in tombs and graves in that area? If Jesus had called forth the dead how many dead people would have risen and come forth? **-S-** The commands of God are so powerful that all who are commanded must obey. **-S-** So, Jesus used Lazarus' name to keep the many dead from rising. In the near future many would rise for we read in Matthew that at the time of the crucifixion when Jesus yielded His body and spirit to death **-S-** <sup>50</sup> "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. <sup>51</sup> And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. **-S-** <sup>52</sup> The tombs were opened, and

many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.” (Matthew 27:50-53) Earlier in the gospel of John, Jesus spoke of the resurrection on the last day, **-S-** “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28-29)

With the crowd watching **-S-** Lazarus “who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth.” (v. 44) Can you imagine the shock and amazement of the crowd as Lazarus hobbled out of the tomb? While they are staring with mouths gaped open Jesus gives a practical command, **-S-** “Unbind him, and let him go.” (v. 44) Jesus, as the One sent by God, is never surprised or carried away with the miracles He did and He was always concerned for the needs of the person. **-S-** Just as occurred with the death the synagogue official’s daughter in the Gospel of Mark, the disciples having discovered that the girl was dead, told the official not to bother the Teacher. **-S-** Jesus overhears and goes to the man’s house with Peter, James and John. He puts the mourners out of the house, raises the girl back to life and then thinking of her says, “*Something should be given her to eat.*” (Mark 5:43)

Jesus having some of the people in the crowd of bystanders unwrap Lazarus then made these, the very mourners who had been wailing without hope and Jews who opposed Him to be participants in the completion of the miracle. **-S-** All those who helped Lazarus became witnesses to this miracle and could not deny it.

As incredible as this miracle was it was only a shadow of what was to come. It was

now not far off that Jesus would Himself be murdered, laid in a tomb and on the third day rise from death defeating Satan and sin for eternity. **-S-** “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) All believers, in the past, present and future will be raised with Christ and receive glorified bodies. If you believe first you will see miracles. **-S-** My beloved - believe in Jesus the Christ and be saved!