Bible Reading Notes John 11-13 Pastor Carl Durham November 22, 2026

We return to John's Gospel in our morning sermon series to what is called by scholars, "The Book of Glory" John chapters 13-21 focus in on Jesus' last week of life before the Cross, which John magnifies as a glorious history. But before contemplating the glory of our foot-washing Savior, before pointing to His Cross as the chief place where His servant's heart will be revealed, we see glimpses of Christ's glory in how He faces the "last enemy," in his pronouncements about His own death (John 12) and in His power exercised to raise Lazarus (John 11). To these two portions of Scripture we now turn.

Monday: Read John 11:38-44, 12:20-23; 12:32-33 The Death of Death

Jesus has one goal as He comes to Jerusalem and declares that the hour has come for Him to be glorified (John 12:23). It is falling into the ground to die (on the Cross) as the beginning of a new harvest of salvation. He goes on to speak explicitly about the Cross (John 11:32-33), showing us that death on the Cross was Jesus' goal. Jesus did not come to Jerusalem to become king: He already was King and didn't need to come down to earth to become one. He came to earth to be planted in the ground by death on the Cross. This explains why, in all that He did, by miraculous signs or by teaching, He consistently sought to point His people to the glory of His Cross.

For example, while there are many glorious facets of the raising of Lazarus in John 11, the glory which Christ promises to reveal in this resurrection miracle is the glory of Christ's entering into the gloomy abode of the dead – into the very height and pinnacle of death's power – the grave itself. At Lazarus's tomb He will enter that abode with His voice, and then, at Calvary, He will enter into the tomb Himself. His reclaiming Lazarus to life showed that Satan's grip on the finality of death was weakening as the timeline of history approached Christ's victory on the Cross.

Meditate and Pray: What power there is in the voice of Christ! Sing about the life-giving power and glory which comes from Christ's voice, in hymn # 164 in our *Trinity Hymnal*:

1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace.

2 My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honors of thy name.

3 Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace.

4 He breaks the pow'r of reigning sin,
he sets the pris'ner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me.

5 He speaks and, list'ning to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice;
the humble poor believe.

6 Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosen'd tongues employ;
ye blind, behold your Savior come;
and leap, ye lame, for joy.

Tuesday: Read John 11:40-44 **For the Groaning of the Needy**

Even the crowds of mourners in John 11:35-36 could see how much Jesus loved His own when they were in the clutches of death. He was "deeply moved," (John 12:38) – a word denoting Christ's deep anger at death and the destruction wrought in the physical as well as moral realm. That same saving love moves Christ to declare out loud that His Father had heard and answered His prayer before Lazarus rose.

But you may ask: Is there a record here of Christ's prayer? We see Christ's heart well up in words of thankfulness for being heard, but when did He pray? Calvin infers that as part of Jesus' groaning and heaviness, (vs 33 and again in 38) there must have been a spoken prayer, or at least an audible groaning of the Spirit. Psalm 12:5 says, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy I will now arise." So, Jesus declares with great confidence that His Father "always hears Him." We are reminded of Christ's joyful confidence in God's saving plan in Luke 10:21 or Christ's cry, "Father, glorify your Name" in John 12:28.

Meditate and Pray: Do we realize what unbroken communion Christ enjoyed *and even crafted into being* as part of His human experience? As our Mediator, Christ opened direct concourse with the heavenly throne-room, making Himself the nexus between heaven and earth (John 1:51). Through Him, we can boldly access God's Throne and Mercy Seat to find help in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Sing about such access in one of John's Newton's hymns (sung to the tune St Thomas):

Behold the throne of grace!
The promise calls us near;
There Jesus shows a smiling face
And waits to answer prayer.

My soul, ask what thou wilt,
Thou canst not be too bold;
Since His own blood for thee He spilt,
What else can He withhold?

Since 'tis the Lord's command,
My mouth I open wide;
Lord open Thou Thy bounteous hand,
That I may be supplied.

That rich atoning blood,
Which sprinkled round I see;
Provides for those who come to God,
An all prevailing plea.

Beyond thy utmost wants
His love and power can bless;
To praying souls He always grants,
More than they can express.

Teach me to live by faith,
Conform my will to Thine;
Let me victorious be in death,
And then in glory shine.

Wednesday: Read John 11:41-42 **An Overheard Prayer**

Herman Ridderbos points out the solemnity of Christ's pause in John 11:41-42. At His command, the stone has been moved. The stench and darkness of death now threaten to eclipse all else. At that very moment, Christ deliberately lifts His eyes to heaven (not merely standing with uplifted hands, which is the usual posture of Jewish prayer – 1 Timothy 2:8, Luke 18:11) and gives thanks that there is absolutely no obstacle, tension or sin to separate Him from unbroken fellowship with His Father. Christ has the ear of the Father – at all times. The affection of the Father for His Son, particularly in the Son's determination to go boldly to the Cross to lay down His life (John 10:17) means that every one of His prayers is heard and answered when the Father lays down His decrees in Heaven. Jesus especially gives thanks *that He can publicly speak* about the closeness of this bond in prayer between the Father and Himself – all for the purpose that those who hear or read this account would "believe that God sent Him." (John 11:42) At every turn, then, Christ seeks to call men into a saving relationship of faith.

Meditate and Pray: Sing about the privilege and joy of believing that God did indeed send His Son into our world to save, using *Trinity Hymnal* # 238:

1 My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in your Word;
but in your life the law appears,
drawn out in living characters.

2 Such was your truth, and such your zeal,
such def'rence to your Father's will,
such love, and meekness so divine,
I would transcribe and make them mine.

3 Cold mountains and the midnight air
witnessed the fervor of your prayer;
the desert your temptations knew,
your conflict and your vict'ry too.

4 Be thou my pattern; make me bear
more of your gracious image here;
then God the Judge shall own my name
amongst the foll'wers of the Lamb.

Thursday: Read John 12:20-27 **Conflict with Death**

Jesus lived with an unselfish disregard for His own comfort, postponing present joy in this world for the future joy of purchasing sinners by His blood. As John 12:25 says, He truly "hated" His life, being willing to suffer acutely now for the sake of eternal life later. We see this suffering begin even before the cross when Jesus says in John 12:27: "Now my heart is troubled…" This word, "troubled," means agitation, disquiet or perplexity and three times describes Jesus' upset in the face of death: John 11:33, 12:27 and 13:21. As B.B. Warfield says of this troubling of Jesus' soul, this word "always expresses the emotions which conflict with death stirred in Him."

Meditate and Pray: Thank Jesus that He faced death as the curse due us for sin with a painful, serious commitment. He viewed it as an enemy to be overcome. Even more, thank Him that He not only was deeply troubled at His own upcoming death on the cross – He was also compassionately concerned with what death meant for others. Recall how Jesus was disturbed even to tears at the grief which Lazarus' death caused. In the same way, thank Jesus for His determination to die to destroy the hold which the fear of death has over us. Now we need not fear dying: it is safe for us because Jesus took so much trouble to die in our place! See also Hebrews 2:14-15.

Friday: Read John 11:41-48 and John 12:27-28 **The Open Door**

In John 11:41-42, Jesus gives thanks that the Father always hears and answers His Son's prayers. In John 12:28, this constant open door in prayer, between Christ and God the Father, is shown to be reality when the Father responds to Christ's request, "Father, glorify your name," by declaring that He will glorify Himself through Christ's ministry, and that He has already done so in past days.
The Transfiguration comes to mind as another place where the Father had already revealed the sparkling whiteness of His Son's Glory and spoken in testimony to Peter, James, and John: "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him" (Luke 9:35). But there are also many other times when the Father glorified Himself through His Son's saving deeds and words. In fact, every day Christ sought to glorify His Father by demonstrating to all that "He did nothing on His own," but only what the Father commanded Him to do.

In that same spirit, while every eye was upon Him in John 11:41, and before He called Lazarus to come forth, Christ made clear that it would be His *Father* who would raise Lazarus in answer to His prayers. Thus, all glory would redound to the Father, and not to Jesus as a mere wonder worker.

Meditate and Pray: How pathetic to behold the leaders of Israel in their planning to kill Christ (John 11:53), refusing to acknowledge that Christ's miracles were done *by the power of* and *for the glory of* His Father alone. Though they could put Christ to death, they could not resist God the Father who had sent His Son and set these events in motion in the first place. May the Father open our eyes to bow to the work that He is doing in our lives all around us, let it run it's course, and trust that His power always has our lasting best interest at heart.

Saturday: Read John 11:45-53 **God Controls Mouths and Motives**

I write these Bible notes shortly after this year's national election, and before knowing the results. Perhaps my ignorance is appropriate for today's passage, with the message it contains that God sovereignly controls even those who grasp at power and use their elected office for their own ambition or ego.

Those in office who gathered to plot Jesus' death (Jn 11:53) did so because of concern that they would lose their nation as a political entity and their own positions of power. This is the fear the Sanhedrin voice. The irony is that Jesus was put to death as a scapegoat to shield these Jewish leaders from Rome, yet history records that in AD 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem, the people perished anyway, and the leaders lost their place. Jesus' death ended up saving His children scattered throughout the world. God controls even the mouths and motives of evil men for His own pure ends:

> God Himself was behind Jesus' death, the God who loved the world so much that He gave His unique Son (Jn 3:16). When Caiphas spoke, it was God who was speaking, even if Caiaphas and God were not saying the same things. D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John, p 422.*

Sunday: Read John 11:42 & John 12:27-33 **Troubled Hearts, All**

How Christ by His Word shines into dark places! Is there any darker circumstance than when the One who calmed the storm says, "Now my heart is troubled," (John 12:27)? The disciples must have indeed been dismayed. The One who always knew how to answer wisely, asking, "What shall I say?" Jesus answers this deep crisis with a statement of purpose, that He is indeed come for this purpose and that He must finish the task. His suffering will result in Glory for His Father; moreover, He believes that God's voice from Heaven will be of spiritual "benefit" to those members of the crowd who believe (John 12:30). In the same way, His proclamation that the Father "always hears Him" (John 11:42) is meant to help the faith of those who will receive Him as "sent from the Father."

Jesus could rest in His Father's assurance that all these conflicts with death (whether at Lazarus' tomb or on His own Cross) would result in saving light and glory. He wants us to rest in such Glory too. For after all, this voice promising Glory is, as John 12:30 says, "for our benefit" too.

Meditate and Pray: Do we strive to make the Cross such an abiding place of rest, sweetness and even delight? Too often Christ's saving work on the Cross can be taken for granted by those who assume they grasp the basics of what went on there. But the Cross is not just for simple minds, nor is it merely a piece of jewelry or piece of furniture. The Cross is life for the believer, and the wounds which Christ suffered on it are powerful proof of our standing in heaven. Today, let us take each perplexing problem, each heavy burden, to the Cross. Where is your heart troubled? There, the Cross must answer.

May the Lord make the following words from hymn # 708 (v. 4) true for us this week:

"O Cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee; I lay in dust life's glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be." (George Matheson)