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[12504 CANDELARIA RD NE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87112](#)

<https://thefoothills.church>

Sermon Delivered by: Pastor Jesse Harden

Date: March 22, 2026

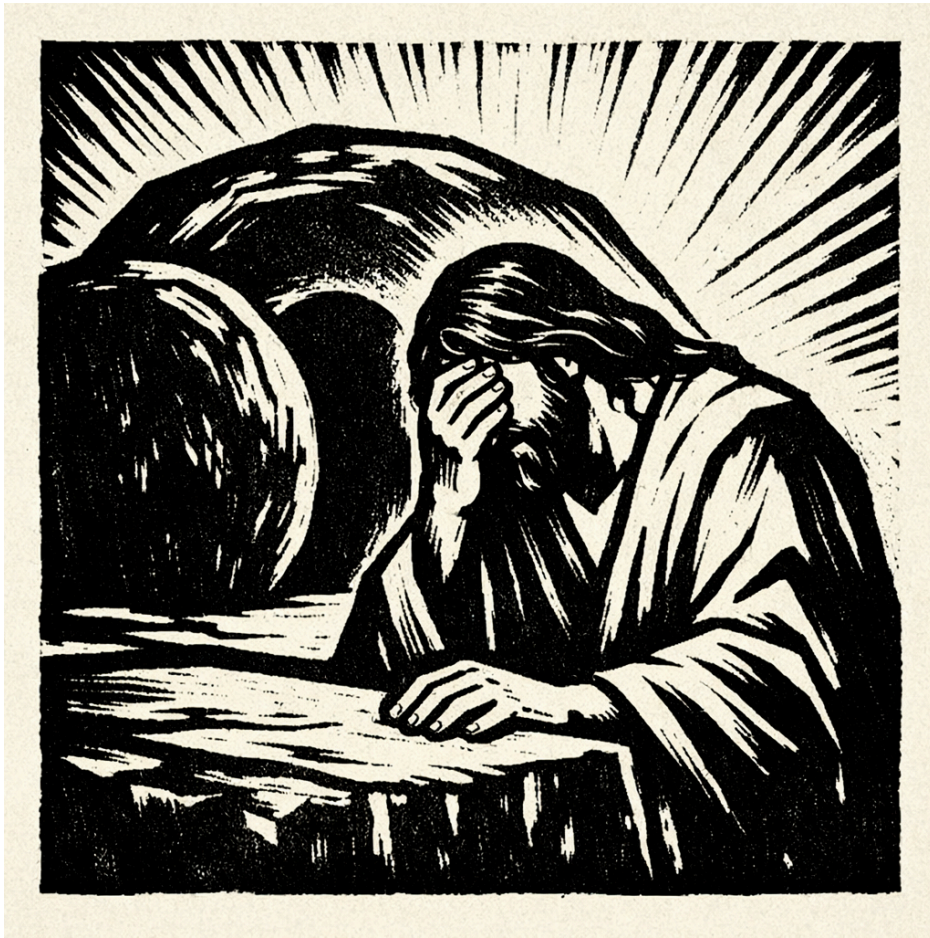


Sermon Recording:

<https://thefoothills.church/sermon/hope-that-doesnt-hurry-grief/>

As you read through this sermon, may the words of Scripture and the reflections that follow draw you deeper into the love of Christ. Feel free to print this message, share it with others, and return to it often as you meditate on God's truth.

Hope That Doesn't Hurry Grief



**ARE YOU TRYING TO RUSH PAST YOUR
PAIN—THE VERY PLACE JESUS IS WAITING FOR
YOU?**

Summary:

In **John 11:1–42**, we encounter a powerful tension: Jesus promises resurrection, and still weeps at the tomb. This message explores

what it means to live with both hope and sorrow at the same time. We are living under the reality of hope, but still walking through the darkness of grief. And in that place, Jesus meets us... not after our pain, but in it.

Main Scripture Referenced: [John 11:1-44](#)

Full Transcript:

Let me begin again in prayer and just trust that God is at work here.

Lord, would you please speak to our hearts, speak to our minds, speak into our lived experience with your good news—your presence in the midst of pain and confusion and doubt and all that we experience. Lord, we thank you that your love is there in the place we stand.

It is the place in which we experience all things, even death, even sickness and suffering. We thank you. I pray that that would be a reality for us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

Now, a man named Lazarus was sick.

And Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. And so sickness occurs in the reality of God's love. Death occurs within the reality of God's love. That's what we see in this passage.

I remember just a couple of years ago, I was invited to be with a family in Kansas City, Missouri, who I had a brief connection with in Albuquerque. Their son had been killed in a car accident. He was 40 years old, had two little girls, a wife. He had just moved to Kansas City to be near his parents, had a great job—everything going well. And they asked me, "Would you come out?"

They flew me out and said, "We're just going to have a small family gathering in our home, about 25 people. We would love for you to be there and just help us make sense of this."

I was like, "I don't know if I can do that, but I'll go."

And I went. The weight of this kind of just increased as the morning came. I flew, got some good barbecue, went to the hotel. And that night I'm just thinking, "How do I do this?" In the morning I began praying, "How do I do this?"

I have words prepared, but these words—I don't feel like they can... there's no words. There's no theological explanation. There's no magic silver bullet or truth that will make the pain and the reality of this tragedy go away or make sense.

And so I realized God really spoke to my heart and said, “You can’t do it. You’re right. And I will be present. I’ll be present.”

He didn’t say He’d make it better. He didn’t say He would make it make sense. He just said, “I’m there.”

And so that’s all I had to do—is point to Jesus.

And that’s what I want to do right now: point to Jesus.

In the reality of death, we grieve. We grieve. Period. End of sentence.

In this world, we suffer. Period. End of sentence.

There are wars right now. There are people snatched from their homes and separated from families. We experience death and sickness. It hurts.

And so we grieve in the shadow of hope.

We, as a people who follow Jesus—we’ve just sung these great songs of hope, of the reality that Christ has risen, and the reality that God loves us, and the reality that we will have hope, we will have redemption—and yet much of our life’s experience is painful.

We grieve. We suffer in the shadow of hope.

And there’s a tension we live in.

There's a kind of Christianity that wants us to rush past grief—to get to the good news, to get to the miracle, to get to resurrection.

That's why I'm thankful for seasons like Lent that lead up to Easter. We have 40 days to get in touch with, and be given permission to acknowledge, sorrow, suffering, and pain. And this is before resurrection.

And so we want to get to resurrection, but John 11 won't let us do that—not right away.

Because in this story, resurrection is certain and grief is still overwhelming. It keeps this tension.

In fact, this is a story where Jesus knows He will raise Lazarus from the dead. The disciples are confused. I think they should be more confused that Jesus is going to go all the way to Bethany to wake Lazarus up from sleep.

As I was reading that, I was like, "That doesn't make much sense. You're going to go wake up Lazarus from sleep? No—he's dead." (Sorry, He didn't say "stupid." That's why I'm not the Messiah.)

So Jesus knows He will raise Lazarus, and He still stands at the tomb, and He still bursts into tears.

So this is a story that teaches us: death and dying still hurt, even when resurrection is true. Death and dying still hurt, even when we believe in resurrection.

So, a couple of observations.

Number one: God makes space for grief.

John, in this text, does something unique—something unexpected. He slows the story down and gives narrative space to grief.

Most of the miracle stories—there are seven signs in the book of John, all intended to bring about belief in us. This is John's main theme: that you might believe. This is a repeated phrase.

And there are seven signs intended to stir us up into belief and faith, and this is one of them.

But in most of these signs, the narrative weight is after the miracle—processing the miracle.

Here, the narrative weight is before the miracle. And it's all about grief. It's all about the reality of death.

And it's not just mentioned in passing.

I counted this morning—every reference. I don't know if you counted as I read—but every reference to death, dying, loss: 22 times in this passage. Twenty-two times in 44 verses, death is mentioned.

So death is the shadow that hangs over the narrative here.

Crying, questioning, anger, silence, laments, grieving, wailing—there's people all around.

Martha asking questions, maybe even challenging: "Lord, if you had been here... I called for you. I said Lazarus was sick. If you would have been here, my brother would not have died."

Mary—the same thing, but much more emotional—just goes down at Jesus' feet and cries out, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Martha stands, processing, maybe even confronting.

Mary falls, overwhelmed and undone.

Jesus' disciples are speaking of death. They're speaking of Jesus' death. They're speaking of their own death: "If we go down there, we will die. Let's go down so we can die with Him."

Family and friends weeping.

And it's important to say—Jesus never corrects them.

He doesn't say, "Stop talking about death so much."

He doesn't say, "Stop talking about death so much."

He doesn't say, "Hey, just keep your chin up. The sun will come out tomorrow." He doesn't say that. This isn't Jesus skipping through the fields on the way to Bethany. He enters the pain.

He also doesn't say, "Hey, let me fix your theology." Martha has a pretty good theology. She has a pretty good understanding of who Jesus is. She gives the correct theological response to Jesus' question—but He doesn't address it.

Martha says resurrection is coming. God is power. Jesus is Lord. "You are the Messiah. I believe that the resurrection will occur." And still—they are grieving.

Ben Witherington, a scholar we've gotten to meet a couple times, says: belief does not erase real grief. Theological answers are not always enough to hold the weight of loss.

So I think that's what's happening here. When we're grieving, we're trying to make sense of it. And we might have the perfect theology, but it doesn't heal our hearts—because death isn't the way things are supposed to be.

Those answers don't help us bear the weight of loss.

And so Jesus lets the grief remain. He gives space to the grief.

Next: God's delay is not God's absence.

I think this is important. This is one of the hardest, most confusing parts of the passage.

It says, “A man named Lazarus was sick.” Verse 1.

Verse 3: “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

Verse 5: “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.”

So verse 6: “When He heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days.”

It seems like a contradiction, right? He loves them—it’s emphasized over and over, His deep love for this family, good friends—and yet He waits.

You know, my wife Joanna has lupus, a chronic illness. I have others in our church with chronic illness. And there’s a lie that sickness tells you—chronic sickness especially.

It speaks. It makes you doubt God’s presence in your life. It makes you doubt God’s care for you. It speaks the lie that God has more important things to do than to address you.

“There must be more important things.”

It can even start to say: “You aren’t loved. You aren’t worthy. Something’s wrong with you. God isn’t listening.”

It can slip into: “God must be punishing me.”

Sometimes: “God is too busy.”

But here's the thing—Lazarus is sick, and Jesus loved him. Mary and Martha grieve the sickness and suffer with Lazarus, and Jesus loves Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

He loved them.

So I just want us to hear this: the presence of tragedy, pain, loss, death, suffering is not the absence of God's love.

It's just not.

Now, I can't explain it—but one thing we can say for certain is that God's love is present, even in the midst of pain and loss and suffering.

He loved them—and He waited.

Delay is not the absence of love.

And so Jesus says, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

Lazarus' death will lead to belief.

Now, here's what I don't believe: I don't believe that God made Lazarus sick so that people would believe. I believe that God works through tragedy to bring about belief.

He doesn't cause pain to bring belief. He doesn't need to do that.

The world is broken. The world suffers. There is free will, and all that is happening in the world. And God works through everything—through all things—for His glory and for our good.

He doesn't cause all things for His glory and our good.

And so God is not absent in the delay—but God is working through it. God will reveal Himself through it, even when it hurts.

Next: we see that Jesus enters the emotional reality of loss.

John tells us something really deeply human—and also deeply divine—as Jesus reveals what God is really like.

As He sees the weeping and the mourning and the loss all around Him, Jesus responds. He's not stoic. He's not sitting unmoved.

Remember, this is someone He loved.

It says, "Jesus was deeply moved in spirit and troubled."

Now, this Greek word—it actually has the sense of anger, agitation, being deeply disturbed and moved.

So there's a lot of scholarly attention around this: what is Jesus angry about? What is He deeply moved about?

Some say He's angry at the disbelief of people. But maybe He's also angry that death exists. He's angry at death. He's angry that His friends, whom He loves, are experiencing so much sorrow.

He's angry that people are experiencing such deep pain.

He may be angry and agitated and deeply moved even at His own death—which is also in this text.

“If you go there, they're going to kill you.”

And after this miracle, it says this is when some of the Pharisees decided to kill Him. This is the moment in the book of John that becomes Jesus' death sentence.

So He's grieving death in all its forms—the reality of death and all that it causes.

And it says: He wept.

Now, “Jesus wept” isn't even the strongest translation. It's more like: He burst into tears.

He burst into tears. He ugly cried. He lost it.

Gut-wrenching tears. Loud. Ugly. Uncomfortable.

Have you ever been around someone who starts crying—really crying, wailing?

Jesus wept like that.

Jesus is deeply moved. Jesus enters the emotional reality of the pain being experienced.

And I believe that is exactly what God is doing now—that Jesus reveals God’s heart, posture, and presence in the midst of our pain and grief.

As we hurt—the loss of family members, of spouses, of friends, of war in the world, of children being killed unjustly, of all manner of tragedy—as it breaks our heart, God’s heart breaks.

He weeps. He weeps alongside us.

So where is God in our suffering?

He’s with us. He’s crying with us. He’s in pain with us. He’s in solidarity with our suffering.

So Jesus, deeply moved—He’s sorrowful. He’s sad. He’s weeping. He’s also angry, disturbed at death itself—at what death does to people, at what grief causes, the tearing apart of love.

None of this is the intention of God’s creation. This is a ripping apart of shalom—what God intended for the world. And we see God grieving.

And so Jesus weeps. He weeps for His friend. He weeps for Mary and Martha. He weeps for the crowd. He weeps for the reality of death. He even, maybe, weeps for Himself and what He will experience.

And so resurrection does not erase grief.

And here's the heart of the passage—here's the promise, here's the hope.

Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in Me will never die."

The resurrection is not just some future day—it's breaking in now. Jesus, the resurrection and the life, has entered the present place—time and space—in which death is wreaking havoc.

And He is entering in with resurrection, with life.

It's breaking in—not just a future promise, but a present reality that He's about to demonstrate.

So Jesus is going to raise Lazarus—after He weeps.

This is interesting. I feel like a broken record, but this is important: Jesus raises Lazarus after He weeps, after He ugly cries, after He groans and is disturbed.

Why would He do this? Why would He weep if He knew He was going to wake him up?

Because He recognizes that death, suffering, loss—it hurts.

It hurts Him. It hurts you. It hurts us. It hurts the world.

Even though a miracle is coming, it doesn't cancel the mourning.

The miracle doesn't cancel the mourning.

We have to be careful, as people, that we don't rush past the mourning—that we give ourselves permission and space to grieve, and give one another permission and space to grieve and to hurt.

Because God Himself is hurting and grieving and mourning—even though He knows He will make every wrong thing right, even though He knows He will wipe away every tear.

But the tears have still fallen, and the pain that caused those tears has still occurred.

And so the miracle doesn't cancel the mourning.

This is important: Christian hope is not about escaping death, but about God defeating death through death.

You realize that Jesus didn't escape death. He went through death—and out the other side.

And we follow Jesus into death and out the other side. We don't skip death.

So grief remains real. Tears remain valid. Pain remains honored.

Now, this last part—we could spend a lot of time on it—but there is a role of the community here.

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead—and by the way, Lazarus will die again. So this is like a temporary fix. Poor guy—he has to die twice.

And it is done for God's glory, so that people might believe.

But after Lazarus comes out of the tomb, Jesus says, "Lazarus, come out!"

The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

This is fascinating.

Jesus raises him—the community unbinds him.

Jesus raises him—the community unbinds him.

There are vestiges of death still clinging to his body. He is bound up in grave clothes.

Jesus could have unwrapped him Himself, or brought him out and instantly removed the clothes—but He invites the community to participate.

To participate in bringing him out. Unbinding him from death.

And so we ask one another, as we experience resurrection life—we have all, in a sense, been raised with Christ—but vestiges of death still cling to us.

And as a community, we are to unbind one another.

We are to look at one another and say, “Let me help unwrap you from the death that clings to you.”

What still smells like death in us? What still clings to us? What habits? What wounds? What lies are we believing? What systems bind us?

And how can we help free one another from the death that clings—from the death that threatens?

Death is powerless because Jesus defeated it at the cross.

However, death still lies. The power of death is the lie that still holds us.

And so we remind one another. We unbind one another. We speak the victory of God into each other’s lives. We pray for one another.

We are being freed. We are being restored. We are being brought back fully to life.

And that is how the community of God—the community of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit—participates in resurrection: by unbinding one another.

So, just to wrap this up:

We're experiencing a lot of death. This has been the human experience since the Garden of Eden. But right now, we can point to many places—and at no time in history are we more aware of the impact of death and how it clings to our world.

We see it. We see it on the news, in every corner of the earth. We have video access to the suffering in the world. And it's overwhelming.

And we should grieve. We should be moved. There should be times where we burst into tears.

And we need to know that the reality of resurrection doesn't cancel the sorrow.

The future miracle of what God is going to do—and what He has done—doesn't cancel the mourning. It doesn't erase the pain.

And so we need to feel with those who are hurting.

That's one thing Lent does—it reminds us that we hurt. We have permission to grieve and mourn. We have permission to doubt, even, and to question.

And as a community, we seek to unbind one another.

So you can believe in resurrection and still cry at the tomb—the tomb of death, the tomb of war, the tomb of dysfunction all across our country and the world.

Because Jesus knew the truth, and He still hurt. He knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead—and He still hurt.

And so Jesus meets you here—not just on the other side of grief. He's with you at the grave.

Just like a couple of weeks ago, we talked about the woman at the well—where we go to meet our deepest desires, and these dysfunctional wells that just destroy us.

But where is Jesus met? Jesus is at the well. He's at the very place you seek satisfaction in the things that harm you.

In the very same way, He's at the tomb. He's at the place of your deepest pain. He's at the place of your deepest hurt.

And He is there, meeting you.

The consistent message of the New Testament—the gospel—is the presence of God in your life right where you are.

You don't have to go somewhere to get to Jesus. He's right where you are, where you need Him most.

And He's there with open arms, and He says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

He's right there—but He won't force a hug on you. So you have to let Him hold you, right at that place of healing, that place of pain, that place of doubt, of loss.

So the question is: where are you hurting? Where are you experiencing loss? Where is death clinging to you?

Is it a relationship? I know there is mourning of real death here—real loss.

Jesus is not waiting for you on the other side of your grief. He is with you in it.

And I love the fact—I'm glad we celebrate the Lord's Supper every week—because this is a living symbol of hope in the shadow of death.

When does Jesus invite His disciples into this meal?

The night before He was betrayed.

And this is a reminder that not only are we a people of resurrection hope—but our victory is won through death.

Not only do we follow a risen Savior—we follow a suffering Savior.

And He says, "In this world you will have suffering."

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

And so we follow Jesus in this way of suffering, and we are permitted to grieve.

But we always remember that the presence of Jesus is in the midst of our pain.

And so in the meal, and in the community, as we come to eat with Jesus at the table, we are invited—in our suffering—to receive healing and the presence of Jesus in the midst of it.

So I invite you now to come forward, and let's celebrate the presence of God in the midst of our suffering, as we are invited to this meal.

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Numbers 6:24-26

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