



~ Darkness Before Dawn ~

“When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” – John 11:4

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were good friends with Jesus. In their home, Jesus could find true rest and a receptive audience to His words. He didn't have to hide His teachings in parables with them. Just as we do, Jesus longed for human tenderness, courtesy, and affection and His heart was knit to this family as they opened their hearts and their home to Him.

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” – John 11:1-3 This wonderful family was facing a major hardship in their lives. Their beloved brother had fallen sick to the point that they sent word to Jesus for healing.

Yet, even in this message to Him, faith was evident. They didn't urge upon Him any specific action. They simply told Him that the friend He loved was sick. They believed He would come in response to this message. However, they only received the response that said, *“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.” (vs. 4,6)*

They clung to this message and tried to encourage Lazarus with it. But to their bitter disappointment, Lazarus died within the day. I'm sure a thousand thoughts went through their mind as they tried to assimilate the message of Jesus with the reality that had just happened. It didn't make sense.

Sometimes in our lives, we face major life issues. There are times when we are knee deep in the hardest stuff that life can offer. It can seem like Jesus may have abandoned us or we may question what God has spoken. Yet, when in our darkest hour we reach out to feel the guiding hand of Jesus, that is when we discover that in our greatest discouragement is the time when God is nearest and very much in control.

Even though Jesus was not physically with them, He was with this family in heart and Spirit. That is evident when after two days, Jesus told the disciples to prepare to go to Judea and ultimately to see Lazarus. They argued about His safety in going for fear of the priests and rulers. But Jesus replied, *“Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.”* Jesus was saying, that the one who does God's will and walks in the path that God has marked out – even if it seems dark and hard

– cannot stumble and fall. God will bring him through the end. This message is encouragement to anyone who has walked or is walking a path with God that passed or is passing “thru the shadow of death”. No matter the circumstances, God will bring us out and bring glory to His name.

Lazarus’ illness and death became the greatest miracle of Jesus and was the seal of God that Jesus was the Son of God. Their greatest tragedy and dark hour became the means of glorifying God in a powerful way that could not be refuted.

Jesus called Lazarus back to life after he had been dead for four days in a spectacular way. No one could refute this miracle because He had the stone rolled away from the tomb and there Lazarus lay for all to see. Because of this miracle, many people there put their faith in Jesus. The family itself was restored and a deep spiritual lesson received. This miracle became an irrefutable sign of the divinity of Christ. If Lazarus had not died, this miracle could not have been performed. Thus, Christ had to allow this family to walk this path to its fullest so it would give Him the highest glory and so they could receive the ultimate blessing.

It is the same in our own lives. Those dark hours that God allows us to go thru are the very means He uses to glorify His name and bless us the most. Like Mary and Martha, we may be confused as to the apparent response God is giving, but if we are walking in trust with God, we can rest assured that not only will God bring us thru it, but that He will bring ultimate glory to His name in the midst of your circumstance. It is only the darkness before the dawn, the hurt before the healing, and the sorrow before the joy. He will hold you together with the might of His righteous right arm.

Kimberly Mills

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