

When the going gets tough, the tough get Jesus

Today, we look at a story , where two sisters who facing a horrible disaster in their lives did just that.

We look at the story of Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus and I propose to outline FIVE THINGS that you and I need to remember in a time of crisis.

In John Chapter 11, we see that Jesus was very close friends with Lazarus, Mary and Martha.

Lazarus gets sick.

His sisters send word to Jesus.

Jesus does not immediately go to Lazarus.

By the time Jesus does arrive in Bethany where Lazarus, Mary and Martha are, Lazarus has been in the tomb 4 days.

Martha and Mary are distraught and grieving, asking Jesus, “Why didn’t you come? If you had just been here, our brother would be alive.”

Jesus assures them that this is not the end.

He goes to tomb, prays to God, and Lazarus arises from the tomb.

Let’s consider five lessons we can learn from this crisis, things we can apply to our own lives when we are faced with a crisis.

1 PRAYER MUST BE A PRIORITY (John 11;1-3)

The first thing the sisters did was to send word to Jesus.
The one you love is sick.

When a crisis hits our lives, be it a death, an accident, a diagnosis, a relationship breakdown, whatever it is....the first thing we need to do is to send word to Jesus.

When a crisis brings us to our knees we are in perfect position to pray.

Pray changes things.

When we communicate with the Creator of the universe, things happen.

We call on the greatest power in the world.

And yet , too many times we lack the faith that prayer will make a difference.

How do I know that?

Because often, we do not pray until we have tried everything else.

Instead of prayer being a last resort, it should be our first option.

Now the sisters could send word to Jesus because they had a close relationship with Jesus.

Had they not known Jesus, they would have been in an awful position with no where to turn.

If you are without Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, if you have not been immersed into Him and become a child of God, then Then it is plain and simple....you do not know Jesus.

When disaster hits you will be without his help.
You will literally be in a world of hurt.

You can change that by taking Jesus as your Saviour, repenting of your sins, being buried with Him in Baptism, rising to live a new life with Him.

Then you will never be alone again.

2 EMOTION IS NATURAL (John 11:35)

One of the worst temptations during a crisis is to try to appear strong.

“ I will be a rock during this storm, you might think”

But let me share a simple truth with you.

When we are weak, he is strong.

We live in a Tom Cruise, Sylvester Stallone testosterone society that says crying is weak and is only for women.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Jesus wept.

Why did Jesus weep?

Mourning over Lazarus?

No...that doesn't make sense.

He knew God was going to raise him from the dead.

He wept because he saw the pain in Mary and Martha, people he loved, and his heart hurt with theirs.

God has made us emotional people and when a crisis hits we need to let it out.

It's OK to be emotional.

It's OK to cry.

When I have taken funerals, I look to see if people are letting their emotions out at some point.

It is not healthy to bottle it up and pretend it doesn't exist.

At some point in the future any little thing could trigger an emotional explosion that could do great damage.

Read verses 21, 32

It's OK to question God.

It's Ok to say, " God, I do not understand why this is happening to me. I don't understand what you are trying to do in my life."

If you are going through a crisis, realize that prayer must be a priority, and that it is Ok to allow your emotions to be expressed.

3 PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF (John 11:6)

Do you think Jesus stayed where He was two more days because he didn't care about Lazarus?

No way.

He stayed where He was because He knew that God was in control of the situation and at the right time God would take care of the crisis with Lazarus.

When a crisis invades our lives we do not want to wait it out. We want it to end as soon as possible/

One of the greatest fears in life, so the surveys tell us, is public speaking. Many people go to extraordinary lengths to "unfold an excuse or escape route"...e.g, I won't be here at that time, I wouldn't know what to say, I'll freeze...

As Christians, when a crisis comes, we often look for these "escape routes"

We want out of the trial or crisis just as soon as possible, and with the least amount of pain.

Romans 5 tells us, “ We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, character hope. And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us.”

Sometimes, the only way out of the storm is to ride it out.

Sometimes the only way out of a crisis is perseverance.

One day Lazarus was alive, the next day he was dead, just 4 days later he was alive again.

A lot can happen in a week.

A lot can happen in three days, just ask Jesus.

4 GOD USES DISASTER FOR HIS GLORY (John 11:4,40)

In the Tsunami disaster, I imagine that God was able to do some things through that crisis that He could not have done otherwise.

Notice that God didn't cause Tsunami, he simply used it for his glory.

He can take a negative and turn it into a positive.

He turned disaster into deliverance.

God can use crisis in our lives to bring about his glory.

In verses 4 & 40, God did not cause Lazarus to die, but He used the crisis for His glory and it changed the lives of Mary and Martha.

So how does that help us?

It helps us with the temptation to blame God.

It helps us to realize that God doesn't bring disaster into our lives.

It helps us to realize that He loves us, and can take our defeats and turn them into His victories.

It also gives us hope that God is able to cure disease, fix any marriage, mend any heart, forgive any sin.

There is no crisis too big for God.

5 GOD CHANGES LIVES THROUGH CRISIS (John 11:45)

The final lesson for us is that God changes lives through crisis.

Sometimes it is the life of the one going through the crisis.
Other times it is the lives of those around a suffering person.

Most of the time it is both.

Think of the lives that were changed in the Lazarus story.

Lazarus...He was never the same again (Think of his stories)

Mary and Martha ...new love and an appreciation for life,
Lazarus and Jesus.

The Jews (V 45)...changed hearts, a new faith

It is sad that it takes a crisis, but thank God that through a crisis He can turn the lost into saved, He can melt hardened hearts, He can make the bitter loving, He can turn orphans into the children of the King.

If you are a Christian and have gone through a disaster in your life, then you know exactly what I mean.

You could say today, “ I am not the same person that I was before the crisis came into my life.”

God has shaped and molded you into who you are today, and has done it through crisis.

If you are a Christian and have not had any “ great disasters”, I do not want to be the bearer of bad news, but at some point you probably will have a time of crisis and testing in your life.

I pray that you will keep these things close to your heart so that you will be totally prepared in a time of crisis.

One final scripture today,..John 11:25-26.. Jesus said,..” I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS>?

DO YOU?

Christians ...are you living your lives reflecting your hope in the risen Lord?

If Jesus is not the Lord of your life, He can be.

The Bible says we must:

Believe in Jesus as the Son of God

Repent of our sins and confess Jesus as Lord.

Be immersed into Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Arise and live for Him each day and every day.