



DELAYED
but NOT
DENIED

Becky Johnson

Sunday Message

Teaching Text:



(ESV) John 11

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." 4 But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles[c] off, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will

rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.".....38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again,

came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I

not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. And

Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you

always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that

you sent me." 43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped

with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

recap.

This week Becky Johnson delivers a powerful and encouraging word about how to navigate seasons of delay. We are all so different and unique and individual in our likes and dislikes. But it is safe to say that all of humanity hates to wait. We live in a society that is actively trying to eliminate delay in its entirety. We have what psychologists are calling 'the instant gratification generation'. "Instant gratification is the desire to experience pleasure or fulfillment without delay or deferment. Basically, it's when you want it; and you want it now."

Here's the issue: delays are an important part of our walk with God. God actually manifests His love for us through delays.

Just because we hate delays, doesn't change Who God is and how He works. And this story of Lazarus is a story of delay ... about two women who were confused about why Jesus would intentionally delay to show His love for them. When Jesus heard that Mary and Martha's brother was ill, His response was to delay. He chose to wait to go to them because He knew the waiting would produce something in them that they needed.

Delays can be confusing if we don't trust that Jesus has a plan for us or if we prefer our timing over His. We need to understand that God uses delay to show His love for us. God desires for each one of us to be mature, complete and lacking in nothing. He is not interested in our comfort; He is interested in our growth.

Delays are not denials and they are not an indication that we are in the wrong place. Mary and Martha are about to experience the greatest miracle Jesus would ever do but they thought Jesus was denying their request (Lord, if ONLY you would have been here...). Oftentimes we are too quick to change course/direction or pray for the wrong things. We live in a society where we equate difficulty with negativity. When we confuse delay with denial, we begin to partner with unbelief. In the story of Lazarus, Jesus delayed with intention and purpose (not because He is not time-aware). God simply does not operate on our timetable. He lives and operates outside of time. Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead all along! God may be delayed but He is not denying you! He may be about to do the most prolific miracle you've ever witnessed in your life.

When human hope is gone, Jesus steps in. Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. Mary and Martha were at the end of their rope and all hope was lost. When our human hope runs out we change our theology to meet our circumstances. It is in our nature to do all that we can to avoid disappointment. When we rely on our own hope, we will not be able to see what God wants to do.

The result of a delay that is born out of love is: God is glorified and we are developed. God may just be setting us up to do something that will ultimately affect our family line for generations to come!

Discussion Guide

Emotional Health Check In:

Take a few minutes to do an emotional health check in with your Life on Life group, creating space for each person to answer the question below:

- **What was the best part of your week? What felt hard this week?**

If the need arises, spend a few minutes praying for one another, asking God to meet needs and help each person carry what feels heavy right now.

ENGAGE

Are you currently facing a situation that is forcing you to wait? Describe what that has been like for you?

Have you experienced a delay that was hard in the moment but that you are now grateful for? What did you learn through that process?

Do you feel that you can trust in God's plan without knowing the plan? Why or why not?

ENCOUNTER

Spend a few minutes in stillness and quiet (you may want to play soothing music) in your group and ask the Holy Spirit the following question:

Holy Spirit, are there any areas in my life where I have confused Your delay with denial? Have I altered my theology and beliefs to meet my circumstances? Please show me where You are in the delay and what You want to teach me in the midst of it?

If time permits, allow those who want to, to share what God spoke to them during the encounter time.

EQUIP

If you are in the midst of a painful delay and feeling hopeless, reach out to someone you trust. Share your experience with them and allow them to speak life, remind you of God's truth and encourage you while you wait.

REVIVAL IS COMING. REVIVAL IS HERE.

