

John 12:9-11

9 When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, 11 since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

John shows us a perspective that is not in the other gospels. The death and resurrection of Lazarus sets the stage for the death and resurrection of Jesus. He comes to Bethany six days before the annual Passover festival. While he is on the outskirts of Jerusalem he is in a safe place with friends but is in extreme danger from the events that are unfolding. The Scripture takes place during a meal. This particular Scripture doesn't get as much attention as other scriptures due to the intensity of events that unfold approaching the death of Jesus. This Scripture links the two scenes at Bethany (the raising of Lazarus and Mary's adoration) with what will happen to Jesus.

A large crowd had gathered around Jesus. One reason for this is because a large crowd followed Jesus wherever he went. Another reason is that Lazarus is now big news. Providing proof of the power of Jesus is a dead man that is now eating a meal. His existence reinforces the reality of resurrection and provides a real live witness and testimony to resurrection. Lazarus is living proof that Jesus is the Messiah. The large crowd that was present and mourning his death has morphed into a larger crowd due to the news. People were drawn to Lazarus not because of anything he had done but because of what Jesus had done. Now the news has stirred up excitement and people want to see Lazarus. There is a convergence of two large crowds, those that found out that Jesus was there and those that came to see Lazarus. This larger crowd that merged from two large crowds is hanging around the excitement. This is big news. Death has been undone by the life giving power of Jesus. Some believe and some doubt, but they all want to see Jesus and Lazarus. An even bigger crowd problem emerges as travelers arrived in Jerusalem before Passover in order to participate in sacrifices to purify themselves for the Passover celebration. As news hit Jerusalem about Jesus raising Lazarus, some of the people that were involved in the temple purification rites left the temple for Jesus and Lazarus. The perspective of priests was that Passover is drawing near and the people that traveled miles for the purification rites were being drawn away.

The resurrection of Lazarus is the most astonishing of miracles. This is undeniable evidence of the divine power of Jesus. The authority over life and death is demonstrated in front of a large crowd of mourners. It is because of this miracle that many people believe in Jesus. However, it comes the consequence that Lazarus gets to live but Jesus has to die. The exchange of his life for Lazarus is in reality a price paid for all of us. The word that spread into Jerusalem provoked intense opposition from the religious leaders that apparently doubted the news. So, the Sanhedrin plotted to kill Lazarus too. He is the living proof or witness to Jesus. Lazarus is a public reminder of what Jesus has done. Life giving power is power that is greater than healing and confirms the divine status of Jesus. The popularity of Jesus has grown significantly and with fervor. They decided that the man that overpowered death must die in order to prevent Rome from getting concerned about an uprising and destroy Israel as a consequence. The problem of the religious leaders was a lack of faith. Their faith had morphed into selfish

ambition that prevented them from being able to see the love of God when it was right in front of them. Being unable to abide in the love of God, the chief priests sought to kill Lazarus, not because of who he is, or what he has done, but because he is alive by the power of Christ.

What Jesus does is he leads people to faith. Our transformed lives are powerful testimony. It can draw people to Christ but also provoke resistance from those who reject him. We are witnesses. The proof is in our discipleship. The authenticity of Jesus is revealed in our changed lives. We are evidence that Jesus is real deal. Discipleship is defined by acts of love and our response to Jesus. The gospel vision is a community of faith that is shaped by love and grounded in a relationship with Jesus. We are to care like Jesus, behave like Jesus, and love like Jesus. God transforms us and our lives are living testimonies of that awesome power. The way we live, love, forgive, and serve others speaks our truth in a way our words can never say. People notice changed lives and are drawn to the one who changed us. Do not let fear silence your witness. Let your life demonstrate God's grace and mercy. In the face of opposition, stand firm in faith. Know that God uses our testimony to draw others as we live transformed lives that glorify Christ and point the world to Him.