How many of you remember the BASF commercials used to come on? Yeah. I don't know if I've ever bought ... I'm sure I've bought products that had been touched by BASF, but apparently they don't make anything. I just remember the tagline from their commercial stuck with me my whole life. Some of you are like, "Who is BASF?" Exactly. But their commercials always said, "We don't make the products you buy. We make the products you buy better." And that was the tagline. I think that when we're talking about Jesus throughout this series on His miracles, I want to speak to you today about developing a core belief that Jesus can make things better. I want to talk about what happens when Jesus shows up, because I believe that when Jesus shows up, Jesus changes everything. Amen. When Jesus shows up, He changes everything. When I talk about core beliefs for Christians, some of you go the doctrinal route. You Go, "Well I believe in the Trinity. I believe in the truthfulness of God's Word. I believe Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for my sins and rose again. He was born of a virgin, and He lived a perfect life. And the Holy Spirit moves in, and indwells us, and empowers us, and gives us for ministry." We think about eternal security, or we think about heaven and hell. We think about biblical truths that we can put in a bullet point list and we go, "I affirm that. I believe in that." And my struggle in my life is that sometimes I can believe all of those things, and I can read books about those things, and I can go listen to sermons about those things and then come those hard days. Then come those moments when life gets hard and believing all of those things doesn't seem to actually change my attitudes and behaviors in those moments.

That even though I believe the core foundational doctrinal truths of Christianity, my Christianity as I live it out still sometimes struggles from a lack of faith that Jesus really does make things better. So I want to get into a miracle today that is one of the more crucial in the New Testament. In fact, I believe that a lot in history turned on the miracle that we're going to study today. We've looked at quite a few miracles that Jesus performed, but the one that He performed today was a problem. It was a problem for the Pharisees and Sadducees. It was a problem for political leaders in His day. It was a problem for His friends and family. We're going to understand and see how for a moment, at least, it even seemed like a problem for Jesus. I want to talk about the moment that Jesus brought Lazarus, His friend back from the dead and talk about what that means, and how we struggle through it. We're going to read a lengthy passage of Scripture, so tune into the details as we walk through this.

But I want us to hear the story and see it unfold, and just catch the details. I'll prepare you, but I don't have time to teach on all of the details, and all of the questions that might arise because there's a lot here, about 43 verses worth of story that we're going to walk through. But I do want to backtrack and go into some of the things that we read and just challenge you to live with hope. To live with hope today, to be the most hopeful people on the planet. When Paul was writing about the resurrection, he said, we don't sorrow like others who don't have hope. We struggle, we sorrow as people who do live with hope. So that's my challenge today. I want us to read this in John 11:1 the Bible says this, "A man named Lazarus was sick. He had contracted necrotizing fasciitis in Destin ..." no, I just ... sorry. "A man named Lazarus was sick." We don't know what with, "He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha." And just for history's sake, you need to know Jesus, these were close friends of Jesus.

He stayed in their home often. "This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair because her life had been radically changed by Him." So lots of very family-like interactions. "Her brother Lazarus was sick, so the two sisters send a message to Jesus telling Him, 'Lord, Your dear friend is very sick.' But when Jesus heard about it, He said, 'Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from When Jesus Shows Up, He Changes Everything! (Completed 07/23/19)
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Transcript by

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He loved him.' But some said, 'This Man healed the blind man. Couldn't He have kept Lazarus from dying?' Jesus was still angry, agitated in His soul as He arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance.

'Roll the stone aside.' Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister protested. 'Lord, he's been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.' Jesus responded, 'Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?' So they rolled the stone aside. Jesus looked up to heaven. He said, 'Father, thank You for hearing Me. You always hear Me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here so that they will believe that You sent Me.' Notice, this is over and over, "So that you'll believe. So that you, disciples, will believe. So that you, Martha, will believe. So Mary, so that you will believe. You guys, I'm saying this out loud so that you will all believe. Then Jesus shouted, 'Lazarus, come out.' And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in grave cloths, his face wrapped in a head cloth. Jesus told them, 'Unwrap him and let him go.' So they rolled the stone aside. Jesus looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, thank You for hearing Me.

You always hear Me, but I said it out loud for ...' that sounds familiar. I don't know what's happening there. It ends with, "Unwrap him and let him go." I saw that slide in him. I must have included more. But anyways. "Unwrap him and let him go." There are things about this story I don't understand. There are questions I have that I don't know if they'll be answered in heaven or not. I keep thinking sometimes, I'll get to ask Jesus all the things I've always wondered about. But then I know when I get to heaven I probably won't care about many of the things I've wondered about. Like I wonder in this moment, I have always wrestled with where Lazarus was in those four days. I've done a lot of studies about heaven, and hell, and the afterlife, and where people go, and when a believer dies. The Old Testament versus the New Testament, I've wrestled with all of that. And so I have thoughts and I have theories, but the Bible doesn't really say. So, I'm not making any guesses or conjectures about where Lazarus was in those four days.

I think it's easy to say, "Oh, he had to go to heaven and back and that must've been hard." I don't know if that's as simple as that. I also don't know what it looks like. There's a part of me that, if you've ever heard of the comedian Mark Lowry used to talk about this story and he said it must've been awkward for Lazarus to come hopping out of the grave, his hands and his feet bound. I wonder what was that like? What did people see as he makes his way out? He's bound up and his head is all wrapped up. I don't know. There are lots of things about this story that I don't know the answers to, and I don't know if I will care about those things when I get to heaven. But here's what I do know, that the Apostle John who wrote the story down for us, wrote it with a point and he didn't answer some of the questions that we wonder about because those weren't the point. He did write it with a different point, and the point is repeated over and over throughout the story.

Jesus says to the disciples, "I'm glad I wasn't there because when I get there I'm going to be glorified, and you will believe." And He talks to Martha and He says, "I'm the resurrection and the life. And if you believe, you're going to see Me do something really great here." And He says to Mary, "I want you to believe." He prays out loud so that everyone hearing will believe. This entire story has a lot to do with the core beliefs with which people live, with which we function every day. Not just intellectual beliefs. Not just the things that I've nailed down, that I believe, that I affirm, that I would say, "Yes." To, that I would agree with. Not just those kinds of truths, but the kinds of truths that make me hopeful. Hopeful when the world is difficult place to live. Hopeful when the economy's in question. Hopeful when there's
political turmoil. Hopeful when my family is struggling financially. Hopeful when I'm wrestling with depression. Hopeful when I'm facing a loss. Hopeful when the job is insecure.

That there's something about our core beliefs that actually it doesn't just help us to intellectually agree with certain things, but it actually changes the way I live every day. That I live hopefully, I live believing that Jesus can make it better. So here's the big question I want you to ask yourself today that we're going to spend a little time and that I believe this story is all about. Do you actually believe, do you really believe that Jesus can make it all better? That doesn't mean, do you believe He fix every circumstance? I'm not asking that. I don't think Jesus fixes all of our circumstances, He didn't bring everyone back from the grave. In fact, I remember when I was brand new in ministry about 19, 20 years old, and I used to hear preachers talk about this passage and they would say brilliant things like, "Now He had to say Lazarus because He's so powerful. If He didn't specify, everyone would have come back from the grave."

And now I go, "That's so dumb." Like, "How many dead people were named Lazarus?" Just randomly in graves here and there, Lazarus's are coming back. No, that's not the point. So I remember telling my church that, that that's not really the case. I don't believe stuff like that. No, He raises who He wants to raise. I know that He raised one guy from the grave, He didn't raise everyone else. People died. People would go on to die. He doesn't stop death for all of them. He doesn't intervene for all of them. He doesn't bring them all physically back from the grave. He doesn't heal all of the diseases and all of the sicknesses that took place in that ancient era, otherwise all those people would still be around today. Right? They'd be 2,000 plus years old. And instead what we see is that Jesus comes in this moment and heals this man so that all of us would learn to answer this question differently. Do I believe, not that Jesus will fix all my circumstances, but do I believe that everything that's broken now will be better later? Because I believe it will be.

It's a core belief that gets me through my hardest days. It gets me through my struggles. It gets me through my sense of loss. It gets me through my fear. It is the core belief that motivates me in how I live, that I believe that when Jesus shows up, He changes everything. That sometimes life can look a little hopeless from our angle, from the here and now. As I stare at it in my humanness, and in my weakness, and in my frailty, that I can be easily intimidated by the threats of life. I can be easily intimidated by the world outside, or by relationships that I struggle with in maintaining them and keeping them going. Or I may struggle in my health, my mental health, my physical health. I may struggle in terms of how I view the world. I may struggle at the hands of other people who take advantage of me, or abuse me, or neglect me, or whatever. We walk through all those kinds of things, and yet the way that we walk through them gets to be different because Jesus proved that when He shows up, He changes everything.

That everything that's broken now will absolutely be better. The Bible describes our current situation as the earth groans. The world waits. We're in a broken place where people are broken, and relationships are broken, and systems are broken, and governments are broken, the environment is broken. Everything around us is broken, and yet I believe at my core, Jesus can make it better. He can make it better. That He's the resurrection and the life. This is the miracle, this is the moment on which everything begins to turn toward the cross. When He commits this particular miracle, this one is fairly undeniable. It's one thing to stop the widow at Nain that we talked about. Her son was in a coffin and they were carrying him through town, and Jesus put His hand on the coffin and raised him back from the dead. That's a little hamlet, a little village somewhere. And maybe the son was maybe just fainted or swooned, right? The Pharisees might be able to explain that one away. This one, however, they can't explain away. He's been dead four days. He was well known. The whole community is there.
He's been in that tomb for four solid days. He got sick and he has laid there, and Jesus shows up. They had wrapped up his body. They knew he was dead. When Jesus calls him back and he comes out of the grave, this presents a tremendous problem for the priests, and the Pharisees, and the Sadducees of the day. They've now got an issue, and you know what their issue is? They suddenly are irrelevant. See for them, for this ancient priesthood, they desperately needed for the people to be dependent on them to get them to God, that they had to be the go between. They had to be this ... I had to gain the respect of other people, I had to make sure they feared me because I was the gateway between them and God. And if people's lives were miserable, I would want them to come to me as a priest and believe that I could make it better, that I could fix it. They would trust me and look to me, and submit to my authority even if I was on the inside very corrupt.

So the priests are watching all of this happen, that's the situation they're in. They want to be the saviors. They want to be the ones to whom the people look, they want the accolades of people. They want those envious stares. That's what they desire. And so they've propped up a system that causes people to be very dependent on them. And Jesus comes and He says God is coming right to the people who are in the deepest pain, and He is directly interacting with them and getting involved in the situation, and raising Lazarus from the dead and the priests aren't necessary. The Pharisees are irrelevant. This passage I think says a lot about Jesus's heart for us, that His heart is stirred. It is agitated, that even though He knew how it was going to end, even though He knew that four days after Lazarus died, he was going to come back from the grave. He also knew His friends were in deep, deep pain, and so He wept with them, and He wept for them, and He mourned alongside them.

He showed up to show support, and His heart was moved and it was broken, and He was angry. He was agitated. I wrestled a lot with that. Why does the Bible describe His heart as being angry a couple of times, agitated, stirred within Him? What is that all about? And I think Jesus has reached the pinnacle of His ministry at this point. He spent almost three solid years ... A little over three years, actually. Pouring out His life, and teaching, and healing, and feeding. He's walked around and He has given Himself to this crowd of people. And even His closest friends at this point still don't get it because history had so corrupted their view of God and their view of what was necessary to please God, and they just didn't get it. He showed up and He was agitated. Agitated at the enemy, agitated at death, agitated at all the things that threaten us the most in life.

And Jesus decided right then and there to prove that He would make it all better for that crowd, for the Pharisees and Sadducee, for the disciples, for Mary, for Martha, for Lazarus, for everyone who was watching and everyone who was listening, Jesus was making a giant point with an enormous exclamation point on the end, "I Am ..." He would say, "... the resurrection and the life, you'd better believe I will do something about this. You better believe that for all of eternity, that which is broken today can get better because I've shown up." Jesus would have us to believe that He actually makes a difference, not just that He's a historical figure to be embraced, and affirmed, and intellectually given assent to, but that He is the savior. He's the one who actually changes the situation, that He calls forth the dead and brings them back to life, and that someday that's going to be true for all of us. The New Testament goes on in 1 Corinthians 15 and says this about the resurrection. "This body that decays must be changed into a body that cannot decay. This mortal body must be changed into a body that will live forever. When this body that decays is changed into a body that cannot decay and this mortal body has changed into a body that will live forever, then the teaching of Scripture will come true." And here's what it is. ""Death is turned into
victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? Sin gives death its sting, and God's standards gives sin its power." And then he says, Thank God that He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I want to share with you the biggest truth of Christianity is not even Easter Sunday. The biggest truth of Christianity is the fact that if Jesus raised Lazarus, if Jesus Himself came back from the dead, if Jesus Himself was the amen to all of the Old Testament, if He was the completion of all the prophecies and promises of God, and we look to Him for our hope and we know He's alive today, then this hope about [inaudible 00:24:29] changes how I live every day of my life. It changes how I approach problems.

It changes how I approach debates. It changes how I approach relationships. It changes everything because I stand here not as one who gets to stay in a place of misery and disbelief, not as one who gets to hang out at a place of unbelief. I stand here as one who is now challenged and charged to go and to believe that when Jesus gets involved, He makes everything that is broken better. I don't know what your life holds in terms of the circumstances that you will walk through in the next week, or the next year, or between now and the grave. It's not all going to be easy, or pretty, or nice. We live in a world that scarred by sin. We have problems, and we have difficulties. And we walk through trials, and tribulations, and persecution and all of that is promised to us. We will go through some really hard things, so I will not stand on this stage and promise you and tell you that it's all going to be ... "Kentucky" word just popped into my head. It's not all going to be Hunky-Dory. You ever heard that?

It's not all just going to be super easy to walk through. Life is never going to be a breeze, but I do know this, it ends in resurrection. It all ends in resurrection. Death is done for. Hell's power is stolen because Jesus came and fulfilled all of the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, became the Messiah for the people of Israel, offered Himself for the entire world. He is alive today. He's coming again, and all of my hope hinges on that. So I know that since Jesus is alive, since He raised Lazarus from the dead, that all of that is a precursor. It's a preview that you and I will get to enjoy someday. Everything about my life needs to move toward the moment of hope that's in the future that I believe, I believe that the great fix for all of this will come to pass. I believe that our problems that are here today are going to be solved. I believe that which is broken is going to be healed.

That Jesus who is righteous, and fair, and just, and loving and grace-filled has risen again and is a King who reigns in glory and He will make it all better. I don't know that life itself is going to get easier for you between now and death. But I can promise you and guarantee you with everything in me that there is always, always hope. There's always hope. And there's going to come a moment in your life, maybe this week, maybe next year, but there's going to come a moment when everybody in the room is speaking in a way that has no hope. It's going to come a moment when your kids, your grandkids, your spouse, your friends can't seem to find the ability to believe better things are coming. They can't seem to crawl out of the hole of the depression, or of the sickness, or of the the discouragement that overtakes and overwhelms us. They can't seem to get beyond that and things seem to get bad, and people will speak with doom and gloom about the direction of a nation or of a world.

But you who follow Jesus, you always get to be the one in the room whose core belief that Jesus will make it all better changes how you speak in that moment. You get to face every situation and say, "I can back up and look at the bigger picture and I can know God is good. This is all going to be okay." That, "Jesus is alive and He's coming again." I've said often that my hope in all of this doesn't rest in the church, or the church's history. I don't come to church and do this thing, and be the pastor of a church because I think that the church in and of itself is so great, or is the ultimate solution to the world's
problems. No. The church is awesome, I love the church. But the church is here because of Jesus, right? Because He died and rose again. We're a body and a community of people that worship Him. And so my hope is not in the church itself without Jesus. My hope is in Christ. My hope is definitely not in government. Amen. My hope is not in money. Money won't fix it.

All money can burn up and be gone tomorrow. I get emails every day saying, "Move out of stocks, get into real estate. Move out of real estate, get into gold. Sell all your gold, buy stocks." I don't know who's right. I know that all of that stuff can burn up, but I know that Jesus is alive. That He rules and He reign, and that He's coming again, and that you and I get to live as people with hope. So do you believe, do you really believe that everything that's broken today is going to get better? If so, then that's going to inform how you deal with struggles this very week. I want to teach you just this tagline that on the end of every problem that you struggle with, every time you make an assessment of the way things are, "Well, I'm out of money." Or, "My health is failing." Or, "My kids don't seem to come around. My marriage seems to be on its last leg."

Whatever the most desperate situations you might find yourself in, I want to challenge you to start today to say this, "Things look bad, but at the end I know that things will always look better. I always know things will look better." To train your mind to believe. when I say believe, I mean not just to affirm, but to let it infect the way you live. To believe that you can back up from a given situation and always come back to the bigger picture, that in the end this will be okay. In the end, Jesus wins. In the end, death loses. In the end, heaven wins and hell loses. In the end, I know the forces of evil are put down and good, which is defined by God that God wins. I know that, I've read the end of the book. I have hope, and optimism, and positivity, not because it's a nice pretty thing and just helps me to feel better about myself. No. I have hope, and optimism, and positivity because my Savior is alive and He's coming again with hope. He will fix everything that is broken. He'll fix everything that's broken.

One of my favorite movies of all time is the Incredibles. At the beginning of the original movie, the Incredibles, they are interviewing Mr. Incredible and he says, the funniest thing. He says, "It seems like every time I saved the world, it just goes and gets messed up again." And he looks down, he's like, "I just cleaned up this mess. Why can't you people just keep it clean for a bit?" And he's dealing with the frustration of having to save it. Well, I know that this world just keeps getting messed up again, right? It just keeps getting broken again. We try to fix stuff. We try to keep it together, but I know at the end of the day, I know that I know that I know that King Jesus has the fix, has the solution. He has the grace, He has the forgiveness I need of my sins. He has the hope I need about my life. He has the healing that I need from all of my sicknesses, soul, and physical, and everything else. He's the one who holds the key to all of eternity and that changes the way I live every day.

Changes the way I argue, changes the way I look at problems, changes my situation. We as Jesus's people have to be the ones in the room who will back up and say, "I'm going to speak with some wisdom here. I'm going to remind us of the bigger picture, that there's a God who heals, who ultimately has this in His hand. And it may or may not get fixed here and now, but it will all get better for eternity because He is the God of eternity. He's alive." It changes the way we live. I want us to bow our heads and ask God to convince us. Jesus, make it solid in my heart and soul. Fix my mind on the truth that You are alive. Fix My attention on the hope that You give. We don't sorrow like others who have no hope. We do sorrow. We sorrow with hope. We believe. If you're here this morning and you've not yet believed, you've not yet placed your faith in Jesus as Savior, as the one who died for your sins and rose again that you might be forgiven and set free forever, would you start there?
Just pray, "Jesus, I want to believe in You today. I want to receive You today. I want to put my hope, and my trust, and my faith in You Jesus. I want to live the rest of my life for Your glory and Your honor." God, I pray that Lord, You would just wash over this congregation right now. Let each one of us who's a believer in this house say, "God, I want to believe You more. I want to believe you more radically, more solidly. Change the way I face every situation in my life by reminding me of the big picture, not just a set of things that I agree with, but truth that changes my mind, my heart, my attitude, my behaviors, my whole life." It all gets better. It all gets better. Lord, we love You, and we praise You. In Jesus name. Amen.