

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

Lesson Plan: Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead

Learning Goals: Students identify the features of foreshadowing present in this story to Jesus' own death and resurrection. Students should also recognize how this story simultaneously illustrates both Jesus' humanity and divinity.

Question: What is the worst smell you've ever smelled in your whole life?

Prayer.

Discuss question on board. (5 minutes)

Read John 11:1-57 (video)

Jewish Funerals

After the death of someone in a Jewish family, there was typically a mourning period of up to 30 days. Professional mourners were paid to wail, moan, and show sadness at a funeral so that the family would not be alone in their grief. Those that attended the funeral would form a procession and walk to the tomb, gathering around it. Speeches would be made here in memory of the individual. There would usually be very simple food at the funeral (bread, lentils, and hard-boiled eggs) to deter anyone from coming to the funeral only for the food and to prevent it from becoming a party. Occasionally, the family would hire professional musicians (typically flute players) to play at the funeral.

The tomb was most likely a cave carved out of the soft natural limestone. It would be about ten feet by six feet by six feet. The body would be wrapped in linens with the arms and legs wrapped separately (unlike the Egyptians). Coins may have been placed on the eyes and a cloth wrapped around the head to keep the jaw from sagging. They were not mummified. After preparation, it would be placed on a shelf in the tomb to allow the body to decompose (for up to a year). After decomposition, the bones were placed in a limestone box known as an ossuary that was kept in the floor of the tomb.

adapted from *A Youth Worker's Commentary on John* by Christie and Nystrom, p. 83-84

Setting:

- Bethany (means "House of the Poor")
- Located east of the Mt. of Olives, about 2 miles from Jerusalem.
- Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (siblings)

Why did Jesus wait two days?

- This detail seems puzzling. What do you normally do when you find out that someone you really care about is very, very ill? You typically go to them and want to be with them.
- Why did Jesus do this?
- The Lord is never late, but he may delay. When we are late, it means we should have been somewhere earlier. When we delay, we may be intentionally coming later. Jesus says that he delays so that God may be glorified through it. (*connection to the man born blind*)

Thomas:

- Connection to theme of light and darkness (vs. 9-10)
- Background - the Jewish leaders had already been trying to get Jesus
 - 7:32, 44 - At the Feast of Tabernacles, they tried to arrest Jesus
 - 7:23 - The rumor was that they were out to kill Jesus
 - 8:59, 10:31 - The crowd tried to stone Jesus on two different occasions
 - 10:39 - They tried to arrest him again at the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah)

- How do we typically know Thomas?
 - “Doubting Thomas” - unfortunate because that is only part of the story
- How might we also know Thomas from this passage?
 - Thomas the Twin
 - Thomas the Brave
 - “I don’t know if I’d be willing to die for Jesus . . . [the reality is that] most of us aren’t even willing to live for him.”

“Jesus Wept”

- Was Jesus fully god or fully man? (Yes)
- This was a demonstration of the humanity of Jesus.
- Jesus was not a divine being pretending to be a human. He can identify with us.
 - “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)
- There is nothing wrong with grief. However, we should be a people who grieve with hope (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Connection to John’s “Sevens”

One of Seven I Am Sayings - “I Am the Resurrection and the Life”

The final and climax of the Seven Signs - raising Lazarus from the dead

(Again - connection to story of blind man)

The Resurrection:

- Jesus says to roll away the stone. Response:
 - KJV - Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. (11:39)
 - “Jesus, we don’t have any Fabreze. It’s gonna be ripe in there.”
- Jesus’ prayer is not for himself, but for the crowd, so that they would know who was truly behind the resurrection.
- Foreshadowing of Jesus’ own death and resurrection.
- The future resurrection is being brought into the present. (Similar to Jesus’ other miracles)

Result:

- Many people saw what Jesus had done and believed in him.
- The Jewish leaders were threatened by the power of Jesus. They are afraid of (1) losing their own influence and authority as well as (2) the fear of the Romans.
- Caiaphas’ words further foreshadow Jesus’ death (vs. 11:50).
- This is the end of Jesus’ public ministry in John’s Gospel.

Lesson Summary/Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Bethany
- Thomas

- Lazarus
- Caiaphas
- How is the Lazarus story a foreshadowing of Jesus' salvation?

