

## East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide:

Lazarus: Unwrapped

Speaker: Pastor Keith Jenkins

Date: May 5, 2024

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**Introduction:** In this powerful message, Pastor Keith Jenkins explored the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11. He emphasized that this miraculous event was not only a display of Jesus' power over death but also a metaphor for the transformation believers should experience in their spiritual lives. Pastor Keith challenged the congregation to examine areas of their lives where they may have felt hopeless or stuck and to invite Jesus to bring new life and freedom.

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### Key Points and Discussion Questions:

1. **Jesus has power over both spiritual and physical death:** Pastor Keith highlighted that just as Jesus raised Lazarus from physical death, He also has the power to bring spiritual life to those who are dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1-5).

### Discussion Questions:

- In what ways have you experienced Jesus bringing new life to areas of your life that were once "dead" or hopeless?
- How does understanding Jesus' power over death impact your faith and your approach to life's challenges?

**Supporting Verses:** John 11:25-26 - "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Jesus' claim to be the resurrection and the life was a bold declaration of His divinity and power over death.
- **Theological Significance:** Jesus' statement asserted that He is the source of both physical and spiritual life and that faith in Him provides eternal life.
- **Application:** As believers, we can find hope and comfort in knowing that Jesus has conquered death and offers us abundant, eternal life through faith in Him.

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2. **Experiencing life to the full requires being unwrapped:** Pastor Keith compared Lazarus' emergence from the tomb, still bound in grave clothes, to believers who have experienced salvation but are still hindered by past wounds, sins, and limitations.

**Discussion Questions:**

- What "grave clothes" or hindrances did you feel were limiting you from experiencing the abundant life Jesus offers?
- How can engaging in spiritual disciplines and Christian community help us to be "unwrapped" and freed from these hindrances?

**Supporting Verses:** John 11:44 - "The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.'" Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Jewish burial practices involved wrapping the body in linen strips and placing a cloth over the face.
- **Theological Significance:** Lazarus' emergence from the tomb, still bound in grave clothes, symbolized the ongoing process of transformation and freedom that believers experience as they grow in Christ.
- **Application:** As we allow Jesus to work in our lives and as we engage in community, we can experience progressive freedom from the hindrances that limit our spiritual growth and vitality.

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3. **Pursuing transformation through spiritual formation:** Pastor Keith emphasized that attending church services alone was not sufficient for the deep transformation Jesus desires for His followers. He encouraged the congregation to engage in spiritual disciplines and authentic community to experience ongoing growth and freedom.

**Discussion Questions:**

- What spiritual disciplines or practices did you find most helpful in your own journey of transformation?
- How can our church community support one another in the process of spiritual formation and growth?

**Supporting Verses:** Romans 12:2 - "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Paul wrote to the Roman church, encouraging them to resist conformity to the world's values and to pursue ongoing spiritual transformation.
  - **Theological Significance:** Spiritual transformation is a process of having our minds renewed and our lives increasingly aligned with God's will and character.
  - **Application:** We can cooperate with God's transforming work in our lives by engaging in spiritual disciplines, studying God's Word, and participating in a supportive Christian community.
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**Conclusion:** Pastor Keith's message on the raising of Lazarus challenged us to invite Jesus into the "dead" places in our lives and to pursue the abundant life He offers. By allowing Jesus to "unwrap" us from the hindrances that limit our growth and by engaging in spiritual disciplines and community, we can experience ongoing transformation and the fullness of life Christ intends for us.

**Reflection Questions:**

1. What is one area of your life where you sensed Jesus calling you to surrender and to invite His resurrection power?
  2. How can you cultivate a lifestyle of pursuing spiritual transformation, both individually and in community with other believers?
  3. In what practical ways can you support and encourage others in your church family who are struggling to experience freedom and new life in Christ?
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**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank You for the incredible gift of new life that we have in Christ. We invite Your resurrection power into the areas of our lives that feel dead or hopeless. Help us to identify and surrender the "grave clothes" that hinder us from experiencing the abundant life You desire for us. Give us the discipline and the hunger to pursue ongoing transformation through spiritual practices and authentic community. May our lives increasingly reflect Your life and light to a world in need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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**References:**

**Primary Sources:**

- "Lazarus: Unwrapped," East Hill Church, 05/05/2024. Delivered by Pastor Keith Jenkins.
- Sermon Transcript, East Hill Church.
- The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV). Biblica, Inc.™, 2011.

**Secondary Sources:**

- Contextual and Theological Insights: Derived from general biblical scholarship and commentaries relevant to John 11 and related passages.

**General Sources on Biblical Studies:**

- Wright, N.T. "The Resurrection of the Son of God." Fortress Press, 2003.
- Keener, Craig S. "The Gospel of John: A Commentary." Baker Academic, 2003.
- Wilkins, Michael J. "Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship." Zondervan, 2010.

**Collaborative Contributions:**

- LLM Contributions: Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided sermon transcript and related biblical passages.

**LLM Training Data:**

- LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to September 2023.