

the final days

The Lenten Journey DEVOTIONAL | WEEK 1 | MARCH 9

"This story is all about the ways in which Jesus surprises people and overturns their expectations...if you stick close to Him, and see the situation from His point of view, then, even if it means days and perhaps years of puzzlement, wondering why nothing seems to be happening, you will come out at the right place in the end." – N.T. Wright

RECEIVE

As you read **John 11**, take note of the expectations that people placed on Jesus. From Lazarus' family to the religious leadership at the time of Jesus, everyone had expectations for what Jesus should do and how He should respond to their requests or power. As you read, circle or underline the expectations you find in this passage.

REFLECT

1. In 11:1–3 & 5, John writes about the family of Lazarus. Why do you think John wants us to know the details about Mary, Martha and Lazarus' family? What do these details add to the story?
2. After Jesus decides to return to Judea, His disciples point out that people want to kill Him (v. 8). Jesus responds with a metaphor in verses 9–10. What does Jesus mean by this passage? What connections do you find here with John's earlier themes of light and darkness?

3. Starting in 11:17, we begin to see the raw and honest expressions of loss and death. Mary stays back home (11:20), and Martha meets Jesus with a bold comment (11:21–22 & 32). As this passage unfolds, what do you learn about the faith of Mary and Martha and their community? What is Jesus trying to communicate to them?
4. Why do you think Jesus waited so long to intervene and raise Lazarus? What does the length of time that passed symbolize?
5. In 11:45, the passage takes a turn toward the death of Jesus. What is happening among the Jewish leadership in verses 11:45–47? The Sanhedrin represents the religious leadership at that time. How does Jesus anger them (11:48–49)?
6. What do you make of the high priest, Caiaphas? Why do you think he makes the statements and decisions that he does?
7. Knowing the plot to kill Him was taking shape, Jesus withdraws to Ephraim with His disciples (11:54). What was God preparing them for during that time together?
8. In 11:56, the community is looking for Jesus at the Passover festival. Everyone who is looking for Him has their own reasons and agenda. Today, when we seek Jesus, we often come with our own agendas and expectations (good or bad). What do you expect from Jesus?
9. With 2,000 years of hindsight, we look at this passage and know that many of the expectations they had for Jesus were misplaced. However, we still make demands and have expectations of Jesus that do not match what He came to do (John 3:16–17; John 10:10; John 11:25). How might you adjust your own view of Jesus to see Him more clearly? How does what you want from Jesus align with what Jesus was sent to do?

RESPOND

Author Anne Lamott once wrote that, “Expectations are resentments waiting to happen.” In our broken world, in a moment of clarity, we can recognize that the people around us will let us down and we will let them down. But when it comes to God, we expect God to deliver. We want what we want. This makes sense when, in a story like we find in John 11, there are expectations of miracles, health, and healing and Jesus eventually delivers on them. We carry these stories with us and

demand God heal broken parts of our lives the way we want or deliver on a promise we think God should honor. But we do not worship an “on demand” God and life does not unfold the way we think it should.

So, this week, take a moment each day to identify one thing you expect God to do for you? Write it down or type it in your phone. What will you feel if your expectation is not met? What if God wants something different for you? What if God’s timeline takes longer than you want? How do unmet expectations shape your experience of God?

BLESSING

God, I come before You, holding tight to my expectations. Sometimes I want You to act like I want You to act. I want You to be predictable, I expect You to show up the way I think You should. Help me release my grip on the outcomes. Help me trust that You are in control even when life does not unfold the way I want. And forgive me for the resentment I might feel when my expectations go unmet. You are the God of love and the giver of good things, help me to trust and believe in that, even when I do not see it.

READ FOR NEXT WEEK



Reading Plan | The Final Days

Week 1 | March 9 | John 11

Week 2 | March 16 | John 13

Week 3 | March 23 | John 14

Week 4 | March 30 | John 15

Week 5 | April 6 | John 16

Week 6 | April 13 | John 12

Good Friday | April 18 | John 18 & 19

Easter | April 20 | TBD