

It's Impossible

Part 4: Believe the Impossible

John 11:1-44

INTRO

What will life be like in 100 yrs?

Don't know. And you probably never will b/c most likely you'll be dead.

Whether you want to think about it or not... truth is **you're going to die.**

Inevitable. Impossible to escape. 10/10 people die. Guaranteed.

Death seems like the most natural thing in the world, so why do we fight it so hard?

Every human and animal tries to fight it with everything they have. Even plants and microbes do, too.

We spend billions on delaying death, it is the driving force behind almost every choice we have made as a species...

The finality of it. The powerlessness we have in the face of it... only makes it worse.

If you've lost someone you love you know what I'm talking about.

"Why did this happen?" "Why me?"

Some of you are mad at God for letting a loved one die. "How could you let ____ die?"

But everyone dies, so why do we fight it? Why are we mad about it?

B/c... There's something in us that says this isn't right. This isn't how it's supposed to be.

We fight and fear death like it's an unnatural horror.

Interesting fact... one of the main things that set the early Jesus followers apart from their neighbors was... they didn't fear death, they didn't fight it.

Historical writings show... The way they composed themselves even when facing execution impressed those who were trying to kill them...

Why were they like this? They believed the impossible.

The biographies of Jesus are full of hard to believe, impossible stories of what Jesus said and did...

Healing diseases just by touching people, making paralyzed people walk as proof he has the authority to forgive sin, silencing an actual storm with just his words.

The most impossible belief about Jesus is also the most important.

Jesus-Followers believe not only did Jesus die and raise himself from the dead... he offers to do the same for us... both now and forever.

He offers to bring true/real life to our everyday lives... give more to our lives than simply trying not to die.

He has the power to resurrect dead relationships, dead hopes, dead hearts...

And he ultimately offers to bring physical eternal life to those who follow him...

Crazy right? But what if there was proof? Historically there is...

John, eye-witness, old man, tells an impossible story proving Jesus' power over death.

Jesus is impossibly more powerful than death.

GOD: Craziest story

V. 1 Story starts rather normal... but John is laying a foundation that this is a factual story with eye-witness proof...

- Personal names... "Go and ask them."
- People believed the first impossible stories about Jesus b/c there were still eye-witnesses who had witnessed the impossible.

From what we can tell these three were close friends of Jesus and he would stay at their house often.

- So the brother (Lazarus) gets sick and the sisters (Mary and Martha) reach out to their close friend... who just happens to be famous for healing the sick.

Jesus gets the message but waits two days and then goes...

V. 11-15 Disciples always so literal

Gets to Bethany finds out Lazarus has already been dead 4 days... dead when he got the message.

House is full of people from all over mourning and comforting Mary and Martha.

Martha meets Jesus on his way to the house...

V. 21-24

Not accusing (Already dead)... just saying "if you had been here you could've healed him. But now it's too late"

“But even though he died I know you are still God’s man“

Yes he will raise on the last day... “Someday... God will undo death. Until then we are stuck in this cycle of death.”

Then Jesus says, depending on your view point, the craziest thing he ever said or the most powerful... “I am that someday and I’m starting that someday now...”

V. 25-27

Not that your righteousness, goodness will earn you to rise at the end of time.

Not that believing the right things and doing the right religion will bring you life

But that Jesus himself is the source of life. That believing in HIM is the path to eternal life.

Jesus is the only religious leader to claim he was the source of eternal life.

Jesus didn’t leave room for us to explain this away... there's no way to separate this statement from him... there's no space for him to just be a good teacher or moral role-model.

Either he was telling the truth... or he was not in his right mind or a manipulative maniac the likes the world has never seen before or since.

So...

Martha goes and tells her sister Mary that Jesus was there... Mary comes and says the same thing... if you had been here... but now it’s too late.

If you’ve ever felt that God is distant when you are hurting, if you’ve ever felt like you shouldn’t feel “sad” (sad doesn’t even describe does it? It’s so much deeper and real) feelings... pay close attention to what John records next... details only an eye-witness would have...

V. 33-35

Ever get angry at a funeral or hearing of someone dying? You’re in great company.

Jesus sees the whole scene and he’s MAD!

He becomes “deeply troubled” bible talk for emotionally done, angry, heartbroken, at the same time.

Why? Sad that his friend is dead and he's too late?

He knows what he's about to do... told his disciples what he was going to do before they even left for Bethany.

Sad that his friends, that the humans he loves and created have to go through this.

Mad at the grip of fear and sorrow... that it has such a power over his children.

He’s angry and emotional b/c he knows this is not how things are supposed to be.

If you’ve ever felt that life is not supposed to be this way... Jesus agrees with you.

Why we fight death so hard... death isn’t natural. It’s not part of the original design.

Deep theological territory... Can go into Adam and Eve and sin... but let's just leave it at...

Biblical writings... Death is a result of sin. (Don't die b/c you've sinned)

Sin, choosing not to trust God and care only about ourselves, resulted in death being introduced to the world.

Both physical and spiritual.

Sin separates us from God and one another. And Death is the ultimate separation...

Physical- soul from body

Spiritual- us from God

That's why Jesus was angry and grieved at the same time.

BUT....

Jesus came to remove the separation that sin created.

- Both physical and spiritual.

And he's about to prove it.

V. 38-39

It's never too late

With Jesus even death isn't the end.

V. 40-43

SHOUTED! MAD!!!

Good thing he said Lazarus' name otherwise all the dead in that graveyard would have come out.

V. 44

Unwrap him... let him walk around, let us see his face... let everyone see what actually just happened.

Impossible right?

Thing is... eye-witnesses.

Enemies didn't even deny it happened... just wanted to kill him b/c of it.

It's proof that there is evil in our world. We've seen it all around us... opposition to GOOD and GOODNESS itself.

There is evil in our world that afflicts us all b/c there is sin in us all.

We have experienced it... and every time something in us says "This is not how things are supposed to be!"

Even plotted how to kill Lazarus. (Read rest of 11 and 12)

Evil and darkness and sin and death ARE real.

BUt Jesus is more powerful than all of it.
He gives a light that darkness can't withstand.
A goodness that defeats the vilest evil
And a life that conquers even death.

YOU:

I could get philosophical right now... "what is dead in your life that you need Jesus to resurrect?"
And that's well and good... but I think this needs to be bigger... That wasn't the main point of what Jesus did.

Jesus is more powerful than death. What are you going to do with that statement?

What are YOU going to DO in light of the impossible things Jesus said and did?

3 choices

Reject the plausibility

- I understand. It seems impossible. But you're more open minded than that aren't you?
- You know there's more to this world than what you can see. Or at least, if you are honest with yourself, can you admit that it is POSSIBLE?
- When you die you die and that's it, right? How do you know?
- No proof of anything else?
- Argue that Jesus is the proof. Just consider it. Is it POSSIBLE?

Investigate the possibility

- Jesus said some impossible things... eye-witnesses record that then he backed those things up by doing the impossible.
- Ask questions to find answers not just to delay coming to a conclusion.
- Read the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life and see for yourself. John's account ("Gospel" of John) is a great place to start or re-start your investigation about Jesus and his possibilities.

Believe the impossible

- Belief is a choice. A choice in light of proof and evidence. Not an erasure of doubts, but an acceptance of the evidence. What would/should a reasonable person conclude about Jesus? Who do you say he is?
- Believe that Jesus died and rose to forgive sin
- Believe that he has power of life
- **Tell him...**
- Then trust that you are held securely by him
- Enjoy, celebrate, share

WE: Life. It's what we were made for. True life that we can experience and enjoy now and for eternity.

It might seem impossible...

But an ancient Jewish rabbi claimed to be the source of that life and then proved his claim by raising himself and others from the dead in front of witnesses who then recorded what they saw.

Xianity exploded in its first couple of hundred years partly b/c Jesus-Followers believed the impossible... God became a man, died and rose again, and promised them eternal life. And then they expressed that belief by living a life of impossible peace and confidence.

When you don't fear death you don't fear much.

True life is possible when we believe the impossible of Jesus.

End this series with Jesus' question to all of us...

I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

Questions

1. What stood out, bothered, interested, or confused you in this week's passage and/or message?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-9. How do you think your life would be different if this was truly your perspective about life and death? How would our world be different if this was the perspective of all Jesus-Followers?
3. Jon asked us: "What are you going to DO in light of the impossible things Jesus said and did?" Then stated three choices we have as a response. Which of the 3 are you leaning more toward? [reject the plausibility, investigate the possibility, believe the impossible] How can your group support and pray for you this week?