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## **God's Unsafe Plans**

### **John 11:11-15**

He said these things and after this said to them, "Lazarus our friend has fallen asleep, but I am going so that I might awaken him. Therefore the disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep he will be saved." But Jesus has spoken concerning his death, but they thought that concerning the resting of sleep he spoke. Then therefore Jesus said to them freely, "Lazarus has died. And I rejoice on your behalf that you may believe, that I was not there but we may go to him."

THE FATHER'S PLAN IS NOT ALWAYS SAFE, BUT ALWAYS GOOD

### **I. We Want Safe Plans**

Many of us, those who are not chronic procrastinators, like a PLAN

I used to plan my vacations, down to the road and exit numbers and timing  
Has seminary all planned out, which courses in what term to graduate  
Even predicted my vicarage site (though not my call) by "process of elimination"

Americans love PLANS

What does everyone keep saying about the war in IRAQ?  
People accuse the President of not planning for "THE DAY AFTER"  
What's our EXIT STRATEGY? What's the PLAN?

More importantly, we like a SAFE PLAN

We want a plan that works, that results in no harm or danger,  
Plans that take everything into account

If we planned a war perfectly

And still said it would result in 10 deaths,  
I think we'd call the plan off

If we put out a drug that will reduce one risk,

But increases another, we take it off the market

We want everything to be 100%, 24 hours a day, absolutely guaranteed SAFE

### **II. We Want God to have a Safe Plan**

We'd like the same with God's plans, too.

We love for God's plans to be SAFE

But often God's plans turn out to be dangerous, and risky, and heartbreaking

And we wonder why God couldn't make it EASIER

We've had two friends and fellow disciples fall asleep in the Lord  
And as I watched these beloved saints be called home,  
I for one wondered, isn't there a SAFER way for this?  
Couldn't the Lord deal with things some SAFER way?

Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, certainly hoped there'd be an easier way  
Their brother was sick, but his best friend was Jesus  
Jesus CURED sick people.  
Surely he'd come, cure Lazarus, and then life would go on...  
Wouldn't that be the SAFEST thing to do?

But that's exactly what Jesus DOESN'T do  
He waits. He waits until Lazarus has been dead for FOUR DAYS  
THEN he decides to go to see him.  
Not only does he wait until Lazarus has fallen asleep,  
But he's GLAD that he has.  
He's glad, because he believes in HIS FATHER'S PLAN

It was his FATHER'S PLAN that he wait  
And Jesus never questioned his Father's plan  
He might puzzle over it sometimes,  
But he never questions.  
Even when his Father's plan is ANYTHING but safe.

In the meantime, though, Mary and Martha have had to keep watch over their brother  
They had to watch him suffer and then die  
They had to wonder why Jesus didn't come,  
Why he didn't do the safe and easy thing and cure their brother right away.

### **III. But the Father has a Good Plan**

ILLUS: Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe:

Susan and Lucy ask Mr. and Mrs. Beaver to describe Aslan. They ask if Aslan is a man.  
Mr. Beaver replies.

"Aslan a man? Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion-- the Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh!" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he--quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."

"That you will, dearie, and make no mistake," said Mrs. Beaver, "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about being safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

That's the way with God's plans – they're never SAFE, but they're always GOOD

It's true that Jesus could have cured Lazarus

As he'd cured so many others.

But THEN what?

What happened with all those people who were cured?

Do they live next to you?

All of them passed away.

The Father's plan was to show that he intended through his Son to

Defeat the GREATER enemy than disease and suffering

These were only temporary

He intended to defeat the BIGGER enemy,

and that enemy was DEATH

So he chose a more difficult path:

The path that made Mary and Martha – and Jesus – suffer

The path that made them wait and put their faith to the test

Mary tells Jesus,

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

She still believes Christ's mission is TEMPORARY, for this life ONLY!

No wonder Jesus was upset with Martha for not letting Mary listen to him talk!

She needed to hear what he had to say, what Martha had already grasped!

So Jesus cries out, and Lazarus is raised,

It turns out that God's plan was GOOD, incredibly GOOD, after all

God and Jesus still loved Lazarus,

And even his seeming absence has turned out to be a blessing

#### **IV. We Rejoice That His Plan is Good, Though Not Always Safe**

That's the way with all our lives

While we, with Mary and Martha, are mourning,

It's hard to see what God's plan might be

Because we EQUATE SAFE with GOOD

And don't realize that GOOD might not always be SAFE or COMFORTABLE

Like Mary and Martha we mourn for a time,

But like Mary and Martha we cling to faith in this Jesus, this Messiah:

We believe that not only we

and our departed Christian brothers and sisters

Will rise at the last day,

But we believe it because JESUS IS the Resurrection and the Life

We believe that if Lazarus could be brought out of the tomb  
And restored to his earthly life,  
Then Jesus too could be brought out of the tomb  
And open the gates of eternal life.

In a few moments we who are gathered here will participate in  
A mystery that those Christians who worship God at home are missing  
We will receive a foretaste of the Resurrection and the Life  
We will eat and drink the flesh and blood of the Son of Man  
And in so doing we will have life in us

The same one that gave us this earthly life  
Can restore us to eternal life at the end of time  
The same one who made the universe and all life in it out of nothing  
Will be able to give us new bodies that do not corrupt or die.

### **Conclusion**

In the meantime, we live in a world that is ANYTHING but safe  
We are surrounded by physical dangers,  
Of terrorism, of crime, of loss of family  
We are surrounded by spiritual dangers,  
Threatening to draw us away from Jesus

But in the midst of the dangers of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh  
Comes our Lord and Savior Jesus  
Not always when we want him,  
But always when we need him,  
Promising always to be GOOD  
Even if he's not always SAFE.

Amen.