

Friends

Intro. There are many examples of friendships on television shows. Some are for laughs; some more seriously. We can “friend” or “unfriend” people on various social media platforms, many of whom we wouldn’t know if they sat next to us in church. In the bible we have some good models of friendship. Tobit and Sarah, husband and wife who prayed together on their wedding night [Tobit 8:4]; Jonathan, son of Saul and David, who killed Goliath [1 Samuel 18:3]; Paul and Barnabas, missionaries after the resurrection [Acts 11:25].

I. The Lord certainly had friends among the apostles. They shared life on the road; they had to become close. Also from scripture we know that within that group he had a closer friendship with

Peter, James and John. Thomas showed his loyalty even if he didn’t understand what was happening. We hear about Martha, Mary and Lazarus and their friendship with the Lord, maybe the only one *outside* of the group of disciples. From scripture we can understand why the Lord might have needed a break from the disciples’ bickering once in a while. Aside from several dinners at the sisters and brother’s home, we don’t know much about how it began. But we do know in *our* lives how chance meetings can set off a spark between people that develops into long lasting-friendships and even marriage.

The friendship allowed Martha and Mary to really lean on the Lord to raise Lazarus, **not later but now**, “I know that God will give you whatever you ask.” Who could get away with that except good friends! Love for his friend Lazarus wasn’t the only reason

the Lord raised him from the dead. Certainly it made the sisters very happy to have their brother back and it made them believe in the Lord all the more. But he had a larger purpose: to show he had power over death. By raising Lazarus from the dead the Lord foreshadowed his own death. There is a certain irony in bringing Lazarus to life because it sealed the Pharisees' decision to put the Lord to death. A death he chose because of his love for us.

Concl. Death is part of our life. We experience death in many ways, literally and figuratively. Members of our families and friends have died. My parents, my grandparents and several close friends have died of disease, accidents or age. We also have moments that *feel* like death – the loss of a dream or a job; disappointments in relationships. Many of these experiences shock us and seem to cut us off

from normal life as we knew it. It is okay to be in that place for *a while*, but at some point we long to be set free from our entombment, our isolation as Lazarus was. Martha, Mary and Lazarus were not only friends but like the Samaritan woman and the blind man they became disciples, leading others to believe in Jesus. Through family and friends **we** can be brought back to life and come to believe again. Then we become disciples and lead **others** back to life in Christ.