

“Jesus’s Delayed Deliverance”
John 11:1-16
March 22, 2020
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

This morning we come to John chapter eleven.

If you have a Bible with you, or if you have a device to bring John chapter eleven up in the English Standard Version, I would encourage you to do so.

We will look at chapter eleven in three sections in the weeks ahead. But each section really needs to be considered in the context of the whole chapter. And so, for each section, we will read the chapter as a whole.

Jesus, you may remember, just left Jerusalem after the people tried to stone him to death. He crossed the Jordan to where John the Baptist had done his ministry. And that is where we find him at the beginning of chapter eleven.

And so, as we read the entire chapter now, I’d encourage you to pay special attention to verses one through sixteen, as they will be our focus.

With that in mind: John chapter eleven.

Please listen carefully, for this is God’s Word for us this morning.

^{11:1} Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸ The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹ Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” ¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” ¹² The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise

again.”²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.³⁴ And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus wept.³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.”⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all.⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?”⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Lord, your hands have made and fashioned us;
give us understanding that we may learn your commandments,
that we, your people, might rejoice together,
as we see the work that you are doing in each of us.
Let your steadfast love comfort us,
according to your promises.
Work now in our hearts, to conform them to your word,
that we may not be put to shame,
but might delight in you.
Teach us from your word now, we ask,
in Jesus's name. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:73, 74, 76, 80]

At what point in your life – or, even better, in what areas of your life *right now* – have you asked Jesus for deliverance ... and he has delayed?

In what aspects of your life have you faced trouble, or struggle ... and you've asked Jesus to deliver you from it ... and he hasn't done it – he has instead delayed?

We can think of a range of areas of life this may be true in, for each of us. Perhaps it is in an area of spiritual struggle: You've struggled with doubts, you've struggled with a specific temptation, and you've asked Jesus to deliver you from it – you've earnestly pleaded with him to take that struggle away from you ... but so far he hasn't. He has delayed. And the struggle – the temptation – remains.

Or maybe it is a mental or emotional affliction you have struggled with: depression or anxiety or grief or something else. And you have asked for Jesus to deliver you from it ... but so far, he has delayed from doing so.

Or maybe it's a relational struggle: tension or brokenness in your family, or your marriage, or a friendship – and you've asked God to just heal it or remove the pain from it ... but he has delayed in delivering you as you asked.

Maybe it's a financial struggle ... or a struggle over work or vocation ... or a struggle over a chronic health condition ...

Or maybe it is the fact that you are living through a global pandemic. Maybe it is the fact that suddenly all your plans have changed, and you feel like you don't know what is going to happen from week to week – or even day to day – and you're not sure how serious this is going to be, and you're worried about finances, and you're fearful for loved ones who are at higher risk, and you have prayed, and joined with millions of others praying around the world that God would turn this pandemic around and bring an end to it and yet still the numbers grow in our country from one day to the next. We ask for deliverance ... but the Lord seems to delay.

Where are you experiencing that pattern most acutely in your life right now? Where do you most feel the weight of it?

Because it is that pattern which we find at the heart of our text this morning: the first sixteen verses of the chapter we just heard.

At the center of our text is Jesus delaying in delivering those who have asked him for help.

In verses one and two we read that Lazarus was ill and his sisters sent to Jesus, telling Jesus he was ill, and implicitly asking Jesus to come and to help – to deliver Lazarus from this illness. And then, in verse six, we read that Jesus delayed. It says that when Jesus “heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.”

John doesn’t give us any reason why Jesus stayed that is related to where he was. He doesn’t say Jesus had important work there to wrap up. He doesn’t say that Jesus was doing anything at all. He just says that Jesus stayed. He delayed when he knew that Lazarus and Mary and Martha needed deliverance.

Now, the exact nature of his delay is somewhat disputed. And it depends on where you think Jesus was – which, based on the end of chapter ten, depends on where you think John the Baptist did his ministry, which is not really clear in the Gospels. Many have assumed that Jesus was just a day’s journey from Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. In that case, Lazarus would already be dead by the time the message got to Jesus. In verse six we read that Jesus waited two days. In verse thirty-nine we read that Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus arrived. Which would mean that Lazarus died shortly after the messengers left on their one-day journey. [Morris, 539]

But D. A. Carson argues, I think a bit more convincingly, that Jesus was farther away than that. He argues that the location of John the Baptist’s ministry was not Perea but Betanea – and so it was a four days’ journey to Bethany, rather than a one-day journey. In some ways that makes more sense of our text. In verse four Jesus seems to speak of Lazarus’s illness in the present tense. And then it is two days later that Jesus announces that Lazarus is dead. This would mean that Lazarus was still alive when Jesus got the news, that Jesus waited until Lazarus died, and then he set out on a four-day journey to arrive four days after Lazarus’s death. [Carson, 146-147, 400-401, 407-408]

And this has some implications. It means first of all that while Jesus would not have gotten to Bethany before Lazarus’s death even if he left right away, still there were opportunities he intentionally rejected by delaying as he did. For one thing, we know from Matthew chapter eight that Jesus did not have to be present to perform a miraculous healing. He could say the word in one place, and a healing would take place somewhere else. He’d done it before. And so, Jesus, when he got the message, could have healed Lazarus right then, and prevented his death. He could have delivered him from death without delay.

Or, at the least, if Jesus had left right away, he could have gotten there two days after Lazarus had died, instead of four – and he could have saved Mary and Martha two days of grief and bereavement. [Morris, 540] The fact that the body had begun to decompose, and the possibility that some first-century Jews believed that resuscitation was more possible in the first three days after death, all would make this miracle of Jesus that much greater with his delay to the fourth day – but still, the fact remains that Jesus’s intentional delay meant two more days of sadness and grief for Mary and Martha. Jesus could have delivered them from that sooner ... but instead he delayed.

Mary and Martha asked Jesus for help – to deliver their brother from illness, and thus to deliver them from sorrow and grief. And when Jesus heard their plea, he delayed.

And I'm sure that in one form or another he has done the same thing to you. And my question for you is: When he does that, how do you respond?

How do you respond when you ask the Lord to deliver you from something – whether a spiritual struggle, or a mental struggle, or a physical struggle, or the current global crisis we find ourselves in – how do you respond when you ask the Lord for deliverance ... and he delays?

I think there are four common responses. And I think our text this morning pushes back against each one of them. Let's take a few minutes and consider those four responses.

One common response is to simply conclude that God is cold or unloving.

We might express this conclusion in a number of ways. For some it may be a bold and defiant declaration. For others it might be a suspicion they would voice only in their secret thoughts. For still more it would lie somewhere in between. When Jesus delays in delivering us from an affliction we can come to believe that he doesn't really care, that he is detached and aloof from us, that his kindness towards us is clinical.

But our text stands in opposition to such claims. John emphasizes that Jesus loves Mary, Martha, and Lazarus – singling each one out individually as he talks about Jesus's love for each.

And they knew that he loved them – they were confident enough in it that their message in verse three didn't bother referring to Lazarus by name, but simply read "Lord, he *whom you love* is ill."

And lest we conclude it was a cold and abstract kind of love, in verses thirty-three and thirty-eight we are told that Jesus was deeply moved. And in verse thirty-five we are told how Jesus himself was driven to tears.

Jesus delayed in coming to deliver these three from their afflictions. But he was not cold or unloving. Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus with a deep and sincere love.

And so it is with all his people. When Jesus delays in delivering us, we must not conclude that it means he is cold, detached, or unloving.

A second common response when Jesus delays in delivering us from hardship is to decide that he is giving us justice rather than love.

Here, we conclude that we are being punished – that God is exacting some kind of payment from us for our sins, rather than lovingly working for our good.

The first thing to notice in this text is that though the Lord delays here, there is no reference to it being an act of judgment. Far from it, the text only emphasizes his love for them, as we have already seen. And more than that, it's likely that Mary at least was already seen as an example of Christian faithfulness to John's original readers. Calvin and others point out that the fact that Mary is introduced first, in verse two, probably indicates that Mary was already well known in the early church as a famous example of faith. [Calvin, 424; Morris, 537]

Now, that said, of course, we do sin. And God does get angry at our sin – he does discipline us. But we need to be clear about the foundational motivation when God disciplines his children – when he is angry with those who trust in Christ. Even then – even in his anger, even in his discipline – God is motivated towards his children *by love* ... just as he was here for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

God's anger at our sin is grounded in his love for us and his desire for our redemption and our good. God's discipline is aimed not at exacting justice, but at correcting us in order to bring us closer to him.

When it comes to God's children – to all who have placed their trust in Christ – God's delay in bringing deliverance is not rooted in justice but in love. Just as it is here with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

A third common response when Jesus delays his deliverance is to conclude that he is putting his glory or his kingdom ahead of our individual good.

And we can put this in a few ways. We might express that we're fine with something bad happening to us, so long as it brings glory to God, or so long as it extends God's kingdom. And there is a right way we can mean that. But there's also a way to think of it that puts God's loving care for us in opposition to his glory or his kingdom. We can act as if it is either one or the other, and decide that we are content to give up our good for the good of his kingdom or his glory.

But once again, our text won't allow us to pit those things against each other. Jesus says in verse four that Lazarus's death and what follows will bring glory to God. Jesus also says in verse fifteen that these events will increase others' faith. But rather than pitting that against Jesus's love for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, the text combines it with them – it combines it with his love for them.

And, once more, the same is true for us. God doesn't do some things for his glory or for his kingdom in our lives, and then other things as expressions of his love for his people. He does things that bring all of those elements together. And that is what we see here in this passage.

A fourth and final common response when Jesus delays his deliverance is to decide that it's okay, because he has loved us in other ways, and in the balance, we still have received better from him than we deserve.

This can be a common response, especially in Reformed circles – and it can be subtle. When Jesus delays his deliverance, when we find ourselves in times of affliction, we can tell ourselves something like: “Well, this is bad, but my life is still better than I deserve.”

And when we do that, I think often what we mean is something like: “Well, look. This affliction obviously seems to go against God's love for me. But look at all these other ways that God has loved me. And look at how unworthy I am of his love. And so, when you take the unloving things God has brought into my life on one side of the scale, and the loving things God has done for me on the other, the loving things win out. And so, I can endure this unloving hardship.”

But once more, our text won't let us do that.

One commentator points out that some translations have inserted the word “Yet” at the beginning of verse six. They have made it: “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. *Yet* when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.” But that’s not what the text actually says. It’s not best translated as “Yet” but as “So” or “Therefore” as we have in the ESV: “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. *So*, [or *Therefore*,] when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.” [Carson, 407]

In other words, verse five is not in tension with verse six – verse five *is the cause* of verse six.

Jesus’s blessings and his delays in delivering us from trials are not two different things on different sides of the scales of what God has given us – they fall on the same side. They are both expressions of his love. Jesus delayed in delivering Lazarus from death, and in delivering Mary and Martha from grief, *because* he loved them. Even our trials are the result of God’s love for us.

In each of our common responses we pit God’s love for us against something else. But what should strike us about this text is that Jesus brings them all together. He tells us in verse four that these events will unfold for the glory of God the Father. He tells us next in verse four that these events will unfold for the glory of God the Son. He tells us in verses five and six that his actions are motivated by love for those who are suffering. And he tells us in verse fifteen that these events are intended to increase his other disciples’ faith.

Jesus responds in such a way as to bring glory to God *and* good to *all* of God’s people. [Carson, 408]

But we often fail to view his delays in our lives that way.

When Jesus delays his deliverance for us, we tend to think it reflects a diminishing of his love for us.

Where are you doing that right now? Where in your life do you see Jesus delaying his deliverance from what you have asked for, and you believe, *in some way*, that it reflects a lessening of his love for you?

Maybe you wouldn’t say it out loud, but it’s led you to think of Christ as cold and aloof ... or as angry and exacting ... or as using you primarily for his own benefit or as loving you in some of his actions but not in others.

Where do you see those patterns of thought in your life?

When Jesus delays his deliverance in our lives, we tend to think it reflects a lessening of his love for us.

But what our text tells us this morning is that Jesus delays his work of deliverance in our lives out of love for us ... though he rarely explains the details.

What we see in our text is that when Jesus delays his work of deliverance in our lives, he does it out of love for us ... though he rarely explains the details to us.

The first part of that we have already seen. Jesus, we are told explicitly in verses five and six, delayed delivering Lazarus from death, and he delayed delivering Mary and Martha from grief, and he did it *because of* his love for them.

What were the specific goals of his love, then, in acting this way? What were his loving purposes?

Well, in terms of his love for the Father, we are told in verse four and in verse forty that Jesus's specific goal was to bring glory to God the Father through a sign and a mighty work.

In terms of God the Father's love for God the Son, we are told in verse four and it is implied in verses forty-one and forty-two that the Father's specific goal was to bring glory to Jesus, his Son, and make his identity clear to all.

In terms of Jesus's love for his disciples, we are told in verse fifteen that his specific goal was to increase their faith.

And then in terms of his love for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, we are told ... nothing really about Jesus's specific goals.

We can hypothesize, of course. We'd imagine Lazarus had quite the experience – one which shaped his spiritual outlook for the rest of his life. We see Jesus pressing Martha and Mary's faith in verses seventeen through thirty-two. We can imagine this all had a great impact on them. But I'm struck by the fact that we're never told exactly what Jesus's loving purpose was for them as he did this.

We're told *what* he did towards them – how he delayed in delivering them from suffering. We're told *why* he did it – that it was out of his love for them. But we are never told what specific goals in their hearts and lives he was working towards.

And that fact should be helpful for us, actually ... because it is just as it usually is in our lives.

We very rarely get to see what Jesus is up to in our lives as he allows hardships to come to us – as he delays delivering us from affliction. We are told that he does have goals. We are told he acts (or does not act) out of love for us. But the details are almost always hidden from us.

Jesus sends no message back to Mary and Martha about why he is doing what he is doing. They wait for him, hearing nothing at first, and then it becomes clear that Jesus has delayed, despite their plea to him. But he's sent no explanation of why. Then, even when he arrives, we are not told that he explained his reasons to them then.

Instead they are asked to trust him, even while in the dark about what he is doing.

J.I. Packer, in a quote I have shared before, puts it like this – he writes: “The truth is that God in his wisdom, to make and keep us humble and to teach us to walk by faith, has hidden from us almost everything that we should like to know about the providential purposes which he is working out in the churches and in our own lives.” [Packer, 106]

That appears to be the case for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus here. It is often the case in our lives as well.

When Jesus delays his work of deliverance in our lives, he does it out of love for us ... though he rarely explains the details of his purposes.

That is a difficult truth for us. What are we to do with it?

Well, our text gives us two things to do: We are to earnestly make our needs known to Christ and ask for his deliverance. And we are to trust that whatever he does with our requests, Jesus always acts out of love, for our good.

First, we are to earnestly make our needs known to Christ and to ask for his deliverance. John Calvin points out that that is just what we see exemplified in the message that Mary and Martha send to Jesus in verse three.

Calvin writes: “The message is short, but Christ might easily learn from it what the two sisters wished; for, under this complaint, they modestly state their request that he would be pleased to grant them relief. We are not forbidden, indeed, to use a longer form of prayer; but our principle object ought to be, to pour into the bosom of God all our cares, and every thing that distresses us, that he may afford deliverance. Such is the manner in which the women act towards Christ: they plainly tell him their distress, in consequence of which they expect some alleviation. We ought also to observe that, from Christ’s *love*, they are led to entertain a confident hope of obtaining assistance, [writing] *he whom [you love]*; and this is the invariable rule of praying aright; for, where the *love* of God is, there deliverance is certain and at hand, because God cannot forsake him *whom he [loves]*.” [Calvin, 425]

Mary and Martha poured their cares into the Lord’s heart – earnestly telling him what distressed them, and asking for his deliverance.

Do you do that?

In the different areas of distress in your life, and in the lives of those around you, do you bring what distresses you to the Lord in prayer?

One of the first things we are to do from our text is to *honestly* pour out our cares and requests before the Lord, just as Mary and Martha do here.

The Lord can take our honesty. He can handle our thoughts and emotions and desires – he already knows what they are. So we might as well be honest with him about them.

That is the first thing we are to do.

The second thing we are to do is to trust that whatever the Lord does with our requests, he acts out of love, for our good.

And this means living by faith, not by sight. Calvin writes that in our text we are taught by Jesus’s delay “that we ought not to judge [...] the love of God from the condition which we see before our eyes. When we have prayed to him, he often delays his assistance, either that he may increase still more our ardor in prayer, or that he may exercise our patience, and, at the same time, accustom us to obedience. Let believers then implore the assistance of God, but let them also learn to suspend

their desires, if he does not stretch out his hand for their assistance as soon as they may think necessity requires; for, whatever may be his delay, he never sleeps, and never forgets his people. Yet let us also be fully assured that he wishes all whom he loves to be saved.” [Calvin, 427]

We do not know the Lord’s timing. Sometimes he brings deliverance right away. Other times he delays, but still brings it to some degree in this life. But other times he delays deliverance until the next life – until the day when he will raise his people from the dead, and restore to them all that is good in this world, and wipe away every tear from their eyes. In some cases, we wait days, months or years to be relieved of spiritual, mental, relational, or physical afflictions. But in many other cases we wait even longer – we wait for the return of Christ and the restoration of all things.

And yet, in every case, Christ will give deliverance. As one commentator puts it, like Lazarus, *all* “who are Jesus’ friends and who fall ‘asleep’ will one day be wakened by him who is the resurrection and the life.” [Carson, 410] In every case Christ will make things right. In every case he has a loving reason for his delay in bringing deliverance to us. And in every case, our calling is to trust his love in what he does.

Of course, we can struggle with that.

Sometimes it is the struggle of the defiant unbeliever, who looks at the condition of this world and refuses to believe in God’s goodness.

Other times it is the earnest believer who, like the man in Mark 9, falls down before Jesus and says to the Lord: “I believe; help my unbelief.”

When we struggle to believe that Jesus is acting out of love towards us and working for our good, even as he calls us to suffer, even as he allows affliction in our lives – what does he give us to strengthen our faith?

What he gives us is the fact that, though he is God himself, he submitted himself to affliction and suffering just as he asks us to submit to it.

And our text reminds us of that again and again.

In verse eight the disciples realize that by going to raise Lazarus, Jesus is opening himself up to his own execution. Thomas reaffirms it in verse sixteen. And then, in verses forty-six through fifty-three their fear is confirmed: Jesus’s actions towards Lazarus seal the plans of the chief priests and Pharisees to put Jesus to death. And by the end of the chapter the order is given to arrest him when the opportunity arises.

Our text points again and again to Jesus’s own death on the cross on our behalf.

And Jesus’s death means a lot of things. But one of those things is that when Jesus calls us to go through suffering in this life, trusting that he loves us, he does not ask us to do anything that he has not already done himself for our sake. For in his death on the cross, he too went through suffering – suffering far beyond what he would ever ask us to go through – and he did it out of love for us.

When we struggle – when we suffer and begin to doubt Jesus’s love for us because he delays in delivering us from our struggles – then our eyes are directed again to the cross. And when we look there, how can we doubt his love?

We are in a time of great uncertainty right now. People around the world have suffered and died. More yet will suffer and die. And the Lord delays his deliverance from this pestilence.

I don’t know what his purposes are in delaying. You don’t either.

But we do know the big picture, and that is what we are called to trust.

We know that Christ is working for his Father’s glory and for the growth of his kingdom.

And we also know that out of love for us, he is working for our good. Even as he delays. Even if we experience fear. Even if we suffer financially. Even if we fall ill. Even if we or those we love die ... even so, he is doing all that he does because he loves his people – whether we understand his purposes or not.

And so, let us pour our needs out to him in prayer. And let us trust in his love for us in whatever he does.

For how could the One who sacrificed himself for us on the cross, not also, out of his great love, work all things together for our good?

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

Augustine. *Homilies on the Gospel of John*. Tractate XLVIII. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series, Volume 7.

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