

The Miracles of Lazarus and Jimmy

The Miracle of Jimmy

On a cold wintery day in January of 1984 in Chicago a six-year-old boy named Jimmy was walking along Lake Michigan with his father. As they were walking along the edge, the bank gave way and both of them fell into the icy, swirling water of the lake. The father grabbed for his son with one hand and held onto the slippery bank with his other hand. Jimmy was nowhere to be seen. He had slipped quietly into the freezing water and had disappeared. The father shouted for help as loud as he could for what seemed to be hours, but was actually only minutes. Someone heard him and called the police. As they pulled the father out of the water, he gasped that his son Jimmy was still in the water. Underwater divers and paramedics arrived and looked for Jimmy. Finally, his small, limp body was found. Jimmy was ice cold and had turned blue. Everyone knew he couldn't survive after almost twenty minutes under water. The ambulance rushed Jimmy to the nearest hospital where Jimmy's parents anxiously



prayed and waited to hear whether Jimmy was dead or alive.

The story of Jimmy and his dad was on all the radio broadcasts and television news programs when, a few hours later, it was learned that Jimmy was alive. A miracle had taken place. Jimmy was alive. For days he was in a coma and for weeks the doctors didn't know if he would live or die. Every day for a week the newspapers and radio and TV reporters kept the world informed about the miracle of the little boy in Chicago who was alive after being dead for twenty minutes. Finally

we all learned Jimmy was out of danger and would live.

If you thought miracles took place only in the Bible, maybe the story of Jimmy will convince you that miracles still happen today, because it is a true story. The New Testament is filled with the miracles that Jesus performed. These miracles are not made-up stories by the gospel writers; they are true stories.

One of the most important miracles in the Gospel is the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead in John 11: 1-44.

Lazarus, a friend of Jesus, lived in the village of Bethany. When Lazarus became gravely ill, his sisters Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that his friend was dying. Four days before Jesus could visit Bethany, Lazarus had died and was placed in a tomb. Be-

cause the disciples feared that Jesus could be hurt by his enemies, they tried to talk him out of visiting Bethany. But Jesus insisted. When he reached Bethany Martha and Mary were sad because Jesus arrived too late; Lazarus had already died. Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus and called to him to come out. After being dead for four days, Lazarus walked out of the tomb.

There were no hospitals or paramedics or TV reporters during the time of Jesus. The raising of Lazarus from the dead was an exciting event. Many people who doubted that Jesus was the Son of God believed in him after they heard about the resurrection of Lazarus. As you read the play on the next few pages try to imagine the sadness of Martha and Mary and what happened after Lazarus rose. How would newspaper reporters report this miracle if it happened today?

LAZARUS: A Play

Narrator
Jesus
Thomas

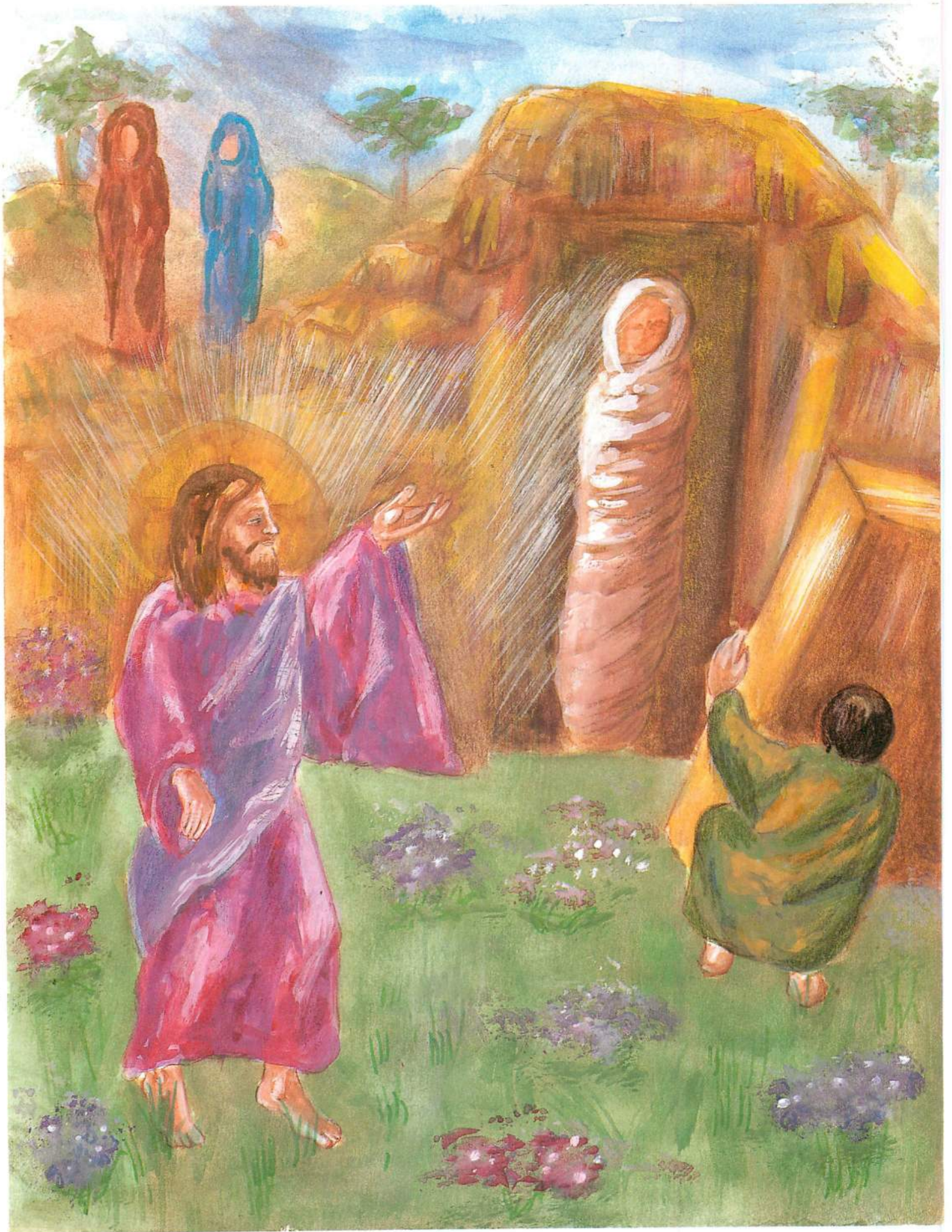
First Disciple
Second Disciple
First Jew
Second Jew
Third Jew

Martha
Mary

Narrator

In the village of Bethany, there lived a man named Lazarus with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Mary was the young woman who earlier had anointed Jesus' feet with oil, and then wiped his

feet with her hair. Jesus was very close to the family of Lazarus. Lazarus became very ill and when Martha and Mary realized he would not get better, they sent word to Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."



Jesus was many miles away from Bethany when he received the news that Lazarus was ill.

Jesus

This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it.

Narrator

Jesus was with the disciples when he received news of Lazarus' illness and after two days decided to go to see Lazarus.

Jesus

Let us go into Judea again.

First Disciple

Rabbi, the Jews there want to stone you. Are you going there in spite of that?

Jesus

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. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep.

Second Disciple

Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.

Jesus

Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.

Narrator

Then Thomas spoke to the other disciples.

Thomas

Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Narrator

Jesus and the disciples traveled to the village of Bethany and found out that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. Since Jerusalem was only two miles from Bethany, many Jews had come to console Martha and Mary on the death of their brother. When they learned that Jesus was near the village, Martha went down the road to meet him.

Martha

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And even I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.

Jesus

Your brother will rise again.

Martha

I know that he will rise again at the resurrection of the last day.

Jesus

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he dies, yet he shall live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

Martha

Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world.

Narrator

Martha then went back home to Mary and told her what had happened.

Martha

Jesus is here and is calling for you.

Narrator

As soon as Mary heard this, she quickly rose and left the house to go to him.

(Jesus was still in the outskirts of the village.) When the visiting Jews saw Mary leave, they thought she was going to the tomb to weep, and they followed her. When Mary saw him, she dropped to her knees.

Mary

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

Narrator

Mary and the Jews who followed her were weeping and Jesus became deeply moved.

Jesus

Where have you laid him?

First Jew

Lord, come and see.

Narrator

Jesus wept.

Second Jew

See how he loved him!

Third Jew

Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

Narrator

Jesus, along with the disciples and Martha and Mary and the Jews, went to the tomb of Lazarus. The tomb was a cave with a stone in front of the opening.

Jesus

Take away the stone.

Martha

Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.

Jesus

Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?

Narrator

The stone was taken away from the front of the cave. Jesus stood still, praying to God.

Jesus

Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that thou didst send me.

Narrator

Then Jesus cried out with a very loud voice.

Jesus

Lazarus come out.

Narrator

Lazarus came out of the tomb with the bandages still bound around him. His face was wrapped with a cloth.

Jesus

Unbind him, and let him go.



Session 4—The Miracles of Lazarus and Jimmy

Key Concepts

1. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead to prove for non-believers that he was sent by God.
2. Miracles or signs of God's love continue today.

Objectives

Students will

1. Relate the story of Lazarus with understanding.
2. Re-enact the story of the raising of Lazarus.

Background for Teacher

Read John 11:1-44; John 11:45-47; John 12:1-19.

The story of Lazarus is divided into five parts. (Note this as the students read the play.)

1. Introduction (verses 1-6).
2. Jesus discussing the situation with the disciples (verses 7-16).
3. Jesus and Martha (verses 17-27).
4. Jesus and Mary with the visiting Jews (verses 28-37).
5. The raising of Lazarus (verses 38-44).

Jesus is asked three times why he couldn't prevent Lazarus' death. Jesus himself points out that Lazarus' death is for a purpose: in verse 4, it glorifies God; and in verse 42, Jesus thanks God aloud so those who are listening will believe that God sent him.

In the Armenian Church, the commemoration of the raising of Lazarus is on the day before Palm Sunday. It is called Lazarus Saturday. The theology of our Church teaches that the resurrection of Lazarus is a foreshadowing of the death and resurrection of our Lord. The living Lazarus was the final proof to the Jews that Jesus was the Son of God. This event was also the turning point for the high priests who, when

they heard the story, were determined to be rid of Jesus and Lazarus. (John 11:45-53)

Note: At the time of Christ, Jews buried their dead on the day of death. The body was anointed and wrapped in strips of cloth resembling bandages. Burial was in naturally-formed or hewn-out caves, which, after burial, were covered by a large stone. Sometimes these consisted of a larger cave with niches for the bodies.

Procedure

1. Review students' "ology" assignments, either aloud or by stopping at each student's desk. (10 min.)
2. The "Miracle of Jimmy" and the synopsis of the raising of Lazarus may be read aloud in class. Point out the parallels of the two events: the faith of Jimmy's parents and the prayers of the witnesses; and that both stories are true. (20 min.)
3. The story of Lazarus has been rewritten into a play to facilitate reading and to emphasize the drama involved. Allow students to choose which part they would like to play, and perform it in class. (20 min.)
4. *Assignment.* The students should begin with this exercise in class and complete it as homework. Ask each student to write and then present in class a news article about the raising of Lazarus. The form of the assignment may be an interview with a family member or an eye-witness, a news bulletin, a feature story (before or after the miracle takes place).
Ask a member of the class to volunteer to make a "TV set" out of a cardboard box in which to present the news bulletins. The presentations will be made in class during the next session. The students may choose to work in pairs—especially if they want to do a "live" interview. Photos or pictures may be used. If a video machine is available to the church, this also may be used. The main idea is to make the event seem as real and contemporary as possible. (10 min.)
5. Closing prayer; dismissal.

Notes
