**Thesis:** Do you feel like Jesus is for you? Do you believe that he cares for you? If we feel like we have to convince Jesus to help us, it may cause us to hesitate in coming to him. But if we understand the depths of Christ’s love for us, we can be confident that he will help us in our time of need.

**Introduction:** Welcome to The Jesus Podcast, a year of stories showcasing the depth of Christ’s love and the glory of God’s truth. I’m \_\_\_\_ your host from Pray.com. Thanks for joining us today for another story of our Messiah of miracles. Be sure to follow the podcast so you don’t miss any of these amazing stories of God’s love.

**Context:** Today’s story introduces us to Mary and her sister Martha. If you’ve been following the podcast, you’ll remember these two sisters who taught us an important lesson about the joy we find in sitting at the feet of Jesus. But this time, we find them in a much more dire situation. Living in Bethany, a small village outside of Jerusalem, they sent word to Jesus who was spending time with his disciples near the Jordan river where John had previously been baptizing people in preparation for the coming of Jesus. Having known Jesus since childhood, the sisters share with him the news that their brother, Lazarus, has fallen ill. But they don’t come to him as lifelong friends. This time, they come to Jesus as the miracle worker and Messiah, praying for a miracle that can save their brother. Through our story we’ll be pushed to trust in Jesus, learning that his plans may often be different than our plans. And when it comes to Jesus, different always means better. As you listen, I encourage you to allow yourself to connect with Mary and Martha in their time of emotional distress, letting Jesus minister to your heart as he does to theirs.

**Message:** Up until this point in Jesus’ ministry, there had only been two instances of Jesus raising someone from the dead, the son of the widow of Nain and the daughter of Jairus the synagogue leader. While Mary and Martha may not have known it, their brother Lazarus would be the third and final person Jesus raises from the dead during his time on earth. According to John 12, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead only six days before the Passover feast, meaning Jesus was nearing the end of his time on earth. What a spectacular way to foreshadow the salvation he would bring by giving life to a beloved friend.

Before Lazarus’ death, his sisters send word to Jesus of his illness, hoping that their friend would be able to heal him before the situation got worse. Wanting to comfort them in their fears, Jesus sends word back to assure the sisters that Lazarus’ sickness wouldn’t end in death. If we were to jump to the end of the story, we know that Lazarus does die, however, his death wouldn’t be the end for him. But for Mary and Martha, these words must have brought a lot of conflicting emotions. At first, they found solace in these words of affirmation. However, it wouldn’t be long before Lazarus does die. Could it be that Jesus was wrong? Certainly not. But it must have been hard for the sisters to wrestle with what Jesus meant. But they had a promise from the Lord that their brother’s illness wouldn’t lead to death, even if all signs pointed in the opposite direction. Maybe you’ve found yourself in a similar situation. You know God has made a promise to you, but your circumstances seem to conflict with any sense that it’s true. But God doesn’t make promises without fully intending to keep them. Whatever God tells us, we can be sure that he’s going to keep his word.

The author of Hebrews writes in *Hebrews 10:23 “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”*

Even when we can’t perceive what God is doing, we can always hold onto the hope that he gives us. God is faithful, and any promise he makes comes with an iron clad guarantee.

As Paul says in *2 Corinthians 1:20 “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.”*

So don’t lose hope just because your situation doesn’t look bright. The light of Jesus will always overcome the darkness.

And as we trust in God, we can find joy in knowing that whatever God allows to happen, he’s going to use it for his glory. In addition to sending word to the sisters that their brother’s sickness would not end in death, Jesus tells them that was going to use this for his glory. Do you believe that the best thing for you is for God to be glorified? God is glorified when all of creation is just as it should be, which means that we are right where we should be. For God to glorify himself isn’t a selfish act. It’s an act that not only brings him what we deserve, but an act that gives us everything he wants us to have. When we’re going through a difficult season, are up against incredibly challenging circumstances, or find our hearts heavy with the weight of this broken world, we can find hope in asking God to reveal how he’s using it all for his glory. This isn’t to detract from what we’re going through, but a means to remind us that God will glorify himself, and that’s the best thing possible for us.

But sometimes the way God wants to bring himself glory may be difficult for us to understand. Let’s think about our story for a second. After Jesus receives word about Lazarus’ failing health, he intentionally stays where he is for two more days. This, in effect, assures that Lazarus would die before he would be able to arrive and heal his sickness. Jesus knew that if he left right away, Lazarus would still be alive. But this wasn’t time for another miracle of healing. This was a time to perform an even greater miracle that few would be allowed to witness. In short, Jesus knew the perfect timing to take action. We have to trust in God’s timing if we want to maintain hope. There will be times in life where we might feel like God is delaying in responding to our prayers or is lacking in taking action to change our circumstances. But we have to believe that as the God who sits outside of time, he will act at the precise time that will accomplish the perfect will of the Father. Whether it’s sooner than we expect, or later than we expect, we should lean into God’s timing.

David writes this in *Psalm 27:13 “I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”*

It may be challenging at first to wait on the Lord’s timing. But over time it will become easier and we’ll become more confident in his timing as we see him always come through. So take heart and wait for the Lord!

After Jesus sends word back to Mary and Martha, he takes a moment to teach the disciples. At this point in his ministry, Jesus had built up a lot of notoriety, some of which brought extreme persecution. It’s clear that the disciples were worried about this, because going back to Judea could mean death. But the disciples had also seen how Jesus had come through persecution. They witnessed him always find a way to navigate through dangerous obstacles. They had known him to slip away from crowds that wanted to bring harm to him. Drawing near to the end of their three years with him, they should have trusted in Jesus’ protection. But the Lord knew their hearts and understood they were still growing. In just a few days, Jesus would be with his disciples celebrating the Passover in the upper room.

While there, Jesus would tell them in *John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

We can’t fault the disciples for needing reminders like this. We’ve likely all had times where we were afraid of others because of our faith. But we don’t have to be afraid. Just like the disciples had Jesus by their side to lead them through any danger, we have been given his Spirit who leads us through life. His presence is always with us. So don’t be afraid to go where Jesus calls you, because he has overcome this world!

One disciple who showed signs of understanding this was Thomas. While the disciples were afraid of what might happen to Jesus if he went back to Judea, Thomas exhorts the other disciples that they should go with Jesus, even if it meant dying with him. Thomas may not have known about the promise of the resurrection, but it’s clear that he was devoted and loyal to Jesus. Sometimes called the Twin, it’s believed that Thomas had a striking resemblance to Jesus, which meant that if Jesus faced the most danger in Judea, Thomas would have been a close second if he was mistaken for Jesus. But through his urging to join Jesus despite the risk of death, it’s clear that Thomas wanted to identify with Jesus in more than just appearance. He was willing to face death even if it meant following Jesus.

We should have the same attitude as Thomas, willing to identify with Jesus, following him regardless of what consequences it might bring. And for us, we have the joy and comfort of living after the cross, knowing that if we identify with Jesus in death, we can identify with him in new life! So find hope in the promises of God, trust on his timing, and follow him wherever he leads. He’s the God who protects, provides, and perseveres, even over death!