

## Our Mighty Warrior Rules

✠ **Over grief** (vv.28-37)

✠ **Over death** (vv.38-45)

✠ **Over power** (vv.46-57)

In the Name of Jesus who is with us like a mighty warrior (Jeremiah 20:11), dearly redeemed:

Some things we hear about these days are totally ridiculous. But one thing you would not expect is someone asking a mechanic to fix his car – but not use his tools. You would never hire a carpenter, but tell him to work without saw, hammer and tape measure. “Doctor, get me well! But don’t give me any medicine and do not use any medical technology.” Some of you have been at work when the computers went down. You know how irate customers can get standing in line an extra five minutes.

There seems to be only one area where folks insist on denying the Craftsman His tools. They want God to fix their life, but not with Word and sacrament. I can’t tell you how many hurting people have reached out for help, but when I try to deliver aid with the one thing needful, they choose to stay away from worship and Bible study. It’s as if they want that silver bullet, the quick fix for everything – only to go back to ignoring God and trying to live without Him. God promises to always bless us through His Word. Sometimes it is in gold nuggets like the sacraments. Often its gold dust we gather over time. Finally, as Jeremiah (20:7-13) discovered, you grow rich in truth like this: **Our Mighty Warrior Rules** ...

### ✠ **Over grief** (vv.28-37)

Don’t you find that one of the hardest places to know what to say is at a funeral? Would it help matters if you missed the funeral and showed up late? What if they knew you purposely stayed away until the person died – even though you were actually able to bring a cure? That’s what Jesus had done. (John 11:1-27) So this is big news when Martha whispers to sister Mary: **“The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”** What a mix of emotions when Mary hurries out to see Jesus in her **grief**.

Her whole support system went along, thinking Mary wanted to cry at the grave. They wanted to be there for her – unlike Jesus who did not show up until it was “too late.” Maybe they were nodding when Mary fell at Jesus’ feet crying, **“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!”**

What kind of **Mighty Warrior** do we have if He can’t show up “on time”? This is one of our greatest fears that causes us so much **grief**. Everything is mapped out in our minds for avoiding problems. “Fix this, Lord, and let me go back to my TV shows, or work, or friends and family!” The other day while I was sharing with my neighbor my own frustrations at foiled plans and slow results, he put a hand on my shoulder and laughed. “Mark, this is where if the situation was reversed, you would be telling me, ‘God has a plan!’” “Thanks,” I said. “I love it when people remind me.”

**Our Mighty Warrior Rules – Over grief** – by God’s plan. And His special weapons don’t kill and destroy anything except human pride and arrogance. **“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”** (2 Corinthians 10:4f NIV84) He wields God’s Word to carry our **grief** away with our sorrows. (Isaiah 53:4f) **“Jesus wept”** while they questioned His love and power....

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quotes are from draft translations for the Wartburg Project – Matthew, John.

## ✠ Over death (vv.38-45)

The Holy Spirit rarely shows so much emotion in Jesus. But He inspired John to use a Greek word (ἐμβριμάομαι) which occurs twice in this text and only three other times in the New Testament. Scripture references and secular Greek include some kind of frustration and anger. So **“when Jesus saw [Mary] crying, and the Jews who came with her crying, he was angry in his spirit and deeply troubled.”** After they questioned His love and power, **“Jesus, again deeply upset, came to the tomb.”** Death is a violent intrusion into God’s perfect creation. Adam insisted on his own plan and rebelled against God, bringing death and suffering into nature which still groans under God’s curse. But Jesus came into this world as **Our Mighty Warrior** who **Rules – Over death** itself. We’re about to get a lesson in reality.

**“Take away the stone,” he said. Martha...told him, “Lord, he smells already. It’s been four days.” Jesus said to her, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone.** God’s plan was to make sure no one could call this a coincidence. There could be no camping in the cave by Lazarus until Christ showed up. Death would be conquered.

And now Jesus gives us a special bonus: a lesson in prayer. First, give thanks even before the problem is solved for this reason alone: **“Father, I thank you that you heard me.”** Our heavenly Father always hears our prayers for Jesus’ sake. His timing and His plans are better than ours because He can see the end from the beginning. Give thanks too for this, as Jesus says, **“I knew that you always hear me, but I said this so the crowd standing around may believe that you sent me.”** God builds up our faith.

**With a loud voice** – so everyone can see **Our Mighty Warrior Rules Over death**, Jesus shouted, **“Lazarus, come out!”** On the Last Day, He won’t say, “Lazarus,” just, “Come out!” All the graves will empty. **“Those who have done good”** as evidence of their faith **“will rise to live, and those who have done evil,”** as evidence of no faith, **“will rise to be condemned.”** (John 5:28f NIV84. See also 5:24; 6:40.) Lazarus must have floated out or shuffled because Jesus told them, **“Unwrap him and let him go.”**

## ✠ Over power (vv.46-57)

Have you ever noticed that some people can’t be happy no matter what? Oh, they’ll celebrate for their guys, but if the opposition does anything good, “It’s bad, boy, bad!” **“Many of the Jews, who came to Mary and saw what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.”** **The ruling priests and the Pharisees** were in a tough spot. Jesus kept doing **“many miraculous signs,”** but they could lose their position! **“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. Then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”**

Current High Priest Caiaphas chewed them out for not realizing something so simple: **“It is better for you that one man should die for the people and not the whole nation perish.”** If you find it hard to believe the Bible, then take note of this. Caiaphas was prophesying God’s truth without even knowing it. Because Caiaphas was high priest, the Holy Spirit wanted him to speak the truth whether he liked it or not. God had a plan to end the death and misery brought on by the first Adam, by letting His Champion, **Our Mighty Warrior** rule **Over power** by God’s grace. As the Holy Spirit inspired another former Pharisee to write years later: **“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!”** (Romans 5:15 NIV84) We’re caught in the flood of God’s grace!

In spite of death threats on Lazarus too, Jesus would withdraw and then return to Jerusalem in God’s good time. Unasked, unexpected, unprotected, unappreciated – Jesus asserted God’s power and love to plan. God forgives us, proving we are **“worth more than many sparrows.”** (Matthew 10:26-31) He wants us to put our trust in **Our Mighty Warrior** with His weapons to **“believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”** (John 20:30f; 21:25) Amen.

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