

Mary and Martha were worried about their brother
He had gotten sick recently and nothing they did seemed to help
The Dr had been to see him and said there was nothing more to be done
Lazarus was dying
If only Jesus was here... He could heal him...

They sent word to Jesus with a runner, saying, *“Lord, the one you love is sick—very sick.”*
That would bring him ...but it didn't
Jesus could have come quickly, but he didn't
He said it wasn't time for him to go; even though he loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus
*“This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory,
so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”*
Jesus stayed where he was for another 2 days—for no apparently significant reason

Finally, Jesus said, it's time— *“Let us go to Judea again.”*
Bethany where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived was about 2 miles from Jerusalem
At the thought of returning so close to Jerusalem where people were after him,
the disciples protested—after all people in Jerusalem were trying to kill Jesus
But Jesus said it was time—Lazarus had died and Jesus wanted to return
Thomas said, *“Let's go. We might as well die with him.”*

When they finally arrived, they found out that Lazarus had been dead for 4 days
Mary and Martha were glad to see Jesus
They wished he could have been there because they knew he could have healed Lazarus
But they weren't upset with him and were grateful that he had come
Jesus told Martha, *“Your brother will rise again.”*
She knows— *“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”*—a weary knowing
Jesus calls her back to the present now, saying, *“I am the resurrection and life. Those who believe
in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”*
Mary and Martha know the truth of this—yet they grieve the loss of their brother

Jesus was deeply moved by their sorrow and asked to be taken to the tomb
By now there was a pretty good group of Jews following Jesus, Mary and Martha
The tomb was a cave with a large stone rolled in front of the door
Jesus asked them to roll it back and expose the entrance
Martha protested, *“Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.”*
Jesus said, *“Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”*
So they took away the stone
And Jesus called to Lazarus and said *“Lazarus, come out!”*
Lazarus, still wrapped in the grave clothes, walked out of the tomb
Jesus instructs the people to remove the grave clothes and set him free

Such a celebration had never been had in Bethany
Lazarus, who had been 'stinking' dead, now was alive

How many times has this happened to us?
It's pretty obvious—just as it was to Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the disciples
—if only Jesus would go right away—Lazarus wouldn't have to die—but Jesus didn't go

Every time that happens—it's an opportunity for God to demonstrate his glory
It usually doesn't happen the logical way
Nor how we would expect it
Often there is a down time—when it looks like there is no hope
Sometimes we don't even recognize the miracle until we're given eyes to see it
The miracle may not be in life extended
Sometimes the miracle is found in the dying...
Sometimes the miracle is in someone or something peripheral to the situation

Recently I became pretty discouraged...
The sale of our property is taking forever—meaning that we're in limbo...
Attendance is declining as people move away or move on
I have been busy with lots of administrative details—but that's not where the life is
I began to wonder if we would make it...
I knew I was exhausted and just needed to get away for awhile
Went to Oregon to see family, did the wedding for Elly and Joe, then a week's vacation
Before leaving, a friend said, "while relaxing, see if God brings you a new image"

While on vacation, I did 4 jigsaw puzzles—which I put together on the dining room table
Number 3 was one I found in the house—it had been opened
Got to the end and one piece was missing—that's always frustrating
But it was probably missing when I got the puzzle out
Then sometime later, the piece was discovered some 20 feet away
In the living room, under a chair—how strange that it got way over there!
Aaah! Satisfaction at a completed puzzle!

Next puzzle was a new puzzle—I opened a sealed box
This one was more difficult and I began to wonder if I could finish it before leaving
Early on there was an elusive piece—but I figured it would show up—they usually do
As I got closer to the end, it really seemed like there were not enough pieces
I kept going—until I put them all in the puzzle and found that one piece was missing
I was frustrated—this was a new puzzle—and I'd been careful with the pieces
I was determined to find the piece and looked everywhere that evening—but no success
Frustration gave way to disappointment, then acceptance—what else is there to do
I left the puzzle on the table until morning
The next day we were packing up to go—I still hadn't picked up the puzzle
On a high counter were 2 puzzle boxes from other puzzles—stacked one on top of the other
On the top box, placed carefully on top of the price tag, was the missing piece
There is no way the piece would have been misplaced to that location
Nor could it have fallen/jumped "up" to that place on the box
It was not a place we were looking or would think to look
It was clearly placed—I think by an angel!

Immediately, I knew this was my image from God
It was too unusual—2 puzzles with 1 missing piece—both found in odd places
Both were found when we were no longer looking and in unexpected places
Particularly with the second one, it was as if an angel placed it there

Like the puzzle, our story looks like it is not coming together in a timely manner
The pieces are not all in place—and we wonder if we are enough to do this move
Yet, my message was that God is doing this—our job is to simply fit the piece in my hand
 And then the next, and the next...
 Sometimes turning the piece several times until it fits
 Faithfully doing that which is given to us to do in that moment
And when we aren't looking for it, God will place the key pieces in place in God's timing

This story isn't finished yet—we are still in progress
 But it gave me hope to persist and remember that God is in this

For Mary and Martha—the missing piece was that Jesus didn't show up on time—before Lazarus died

What is your missing piece? Where are you frustrated that things aren't coming together?
 Ask God to show you how he is demonstrating his glory in whatever isn't working
 Wait and see...
 Trust that God is in it and God is working—even when it seems that nothing is happening

When we do see the miracle—celebrate it...
 Tell people
 Let gratitude well up and spill over
 Tell and retell the story of God's miracle and celebrate it!