

Really big hope

By [Evan D. Garner](#)

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Sunday is [All Saints' Day](#), and, many churches will read the Roll of Remembrance, which includes the names of the faithful who have died in the past year. Yes, I know there's a separate occasion for that on November 2, when the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed is observed. Yes, I understand that confusing those who have died in the past year with all the saints who have gone before undermines our ability to focus and properly celebrate either. Yes, I know the Episcopal Church has an underdeveloped theology of sainthood. But, sweeping all of that aside for a moment, when I read [John 11:32-22](#), I find myself wondering just how big of a hope we are celebrating.

There is a strategic question given to us by John that brings that consideration to the front of my mind. As Jesus weeps at the grave of his friend Lazarus, some in the crowd say to themselves, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" (It's fortuitous that, despite jumping from Mark 10 to John 11, there is still a connection with opening the eyes of a blind man.) It is the timing behind this question—the "aw, shucks! he should have made it here a little sooner" attitude that it represents—that forces us to consider just how much hope we are willing to have in Jesus.

The crowd shows that they have learned to accept that Jesus is a remarkable healer. He has done amazing things like feeding the 5,000 and walking on water. In John 9, he even healed a man who was born blind. Confirming the remarkable nature of that miracle, the man, when confronted by the religious authorities, declares, "Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind." In other words, there is evidence that Jesus is a unique healer—that his powers to restore people to health are unparalleled in human history. The crowd has accepted this premise. Their question is genuine. They know that someone with Jesus' healing touch could have saved Lazarus from dying.

But, of course, the story wasn't over. Jesus did what no one believed could be done. Dead is dead. As [Miracle Max](#) says, "With all dead, well, with all dead there's usually

only one thing you can do ... Go through his clothes and look for loose change." But Jesus isn't just a life-saving healer. He's the one who can reverse even death itself, which is to say God.

Just as there's a huge difference between saving the life of a sick man and bringing a four-days-dead man back from the grave, there's a tremendous chasm between recognizing Jesus as a remarkable healer and identifying him as the one who has power over life and death. Which one do you believe in? Which one does the church hold up as savior of the world? Do we want a remarkable healer—one who can comfort us, restore us, and make things right in this life? Or do we want a savior—one who can take us from this life, through death, and into life everlasting?

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