Title: THE STORY WITHIN THE STORY, JOHN 11:1-44.
(Chatham, NJ; 04/10/11, AM) [E – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Although the story of Lazarus provides us with hope because we see a man raised from the dead, the real story is the resurrection of Jesus that will follow.

Purpose: To demonstrate that without Jesus we have no hope beyond death by seeing the true meaning of Lazarus' raising.

Introduction:

1. I heard on the radio last week that more and more people are resorting to eulogies by family and friends on behalf of their loved ones without a member of the clergy.
2. The commentator believed this was because fewer and fewer people have any relationship with clergy.
3. Expressions of remembrance and love by family and friends are great, and some resort to this because ritual seems cold and distant.
4. But think about what we miss without words that elevate our thoughts beyond the life of the deceased. (We don't need to choose either/or; we can have both/and.)
5. Though we see in the story of Lazarus a great human drama of sorrow, the deeper story is about the glory of the Son of God about to be revealed in his resurrection.
6. This is the real story, and without it a funeral is another life snuffed out.

I. The Story of Jesus – The Son of God will be glorified, 4.

A. Jesus gives this story the purpose of glorifying God and the Son of God, 4.
    1. Remember the purpose of the blind man story (9:3)?
    2. Healing the blind man served a greater purpose.
    3. Raising Lazarus from the dead also served a greater purpose.
    4. In neither case did Jesus intend for such miracles to occur in every human life.
    5. Funeral parlors would have gone out of business long ago.
    6. However, in this situation Jesus invests the story with supreme significance.

B. "So that you may believe," (15).
    1. Jesus waited to attend to Lazarus (3-5 & 11-13).
    2. The sisters sent a message to him, but he doesn't go.
    3. He used this occasion to reveal what was going to be his greatest triumph.
    4. This funeral revealed the glory of God and foreshadowed Jesus' glory.
    5. He takes it a step further in John 12:32.

II. The Story of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus

A. The story of a sick friend
    1. You have all experienced this story.
    2. Jesus is close friends with the family, 5.
    3. Martha informs him of Lazarus' illness—to request healing (21, 32)?
    4. Sickness reminds us of our need for God; we pray.
    5. Healing is the business of God, but he sometimes chooses not to.
    6. Jesus chooses to delay his visit, and Lazarus dies.
    7. Now they must deal with grief. Is all lost?

B. The conversation with Martha
    1. We see a different side of her than in Luke 10:38-42.
    2. Her faith in Christ has taken on a great deal of hope, 24.
    3. Her profession of faith stands beside Peter's as one of the most complete confessions in the Gospels, 27.
    4. But it is Jesus' statement that drives this entire episode, 25.

5. Yet she, Mary, and others (37) had hoped for (expected?) healing.
6. Jesus now reveals a deeper solution: victory over death.

III. The Resurrection and the Life, 25.

A. This is the glory of God and of the Son of God.
    1. Jesus wants people to believe (15, 25-26, 40, 42).
    2. This story points to the greater reality that he provides: eternal life.

B. Jesus says, “Though he dies, yet shall he live,” 25.
    1. Furthermore “he shall never die,” 26.
    2. This fits with John’s whole purpose in writing this Gospel, 20:31.
    3. How does this sound in a funeral setting?
    4. What else could we have that pierces the grief and loss?
    5. Can any eulogy replace such hope?

Conclusion:
1. As a result of raising Lazarus many believed in him, 45.
2. Yet the Pharisees want only to get rid of him (53) and the evidence (Lazarus, 12:10-11).
3. Which group are you in? In a world filled with sickness, death, and grief do you want hope?
4. Without Jesus your passing might just be another eulogy.
5. Yet you can have assurance of life after the grave.
6. Come to the one who is the resurrection and the life!