

JESUS WEPT—HE WEEPS WITH US

John 11:28-37 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

When Martha confessed to Jesus saying, “I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world,” she felt duty bound to go back home and whisper quietly to Mary, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” When Mary heard these words, quickly she rose and went no doubt with Martha to find Jesus when Martha had met Him outside the village of Bethany. Now the coming of Mary with Martha brought an entourage of people for we read in John 11:31 that all the Jews in the house got up to follow her, supposing Mary was off to the tomb to weep there, Mary appears to be inconsolable, so on day four after Lazarus died and was buried, all those weeping with Mary in the house were off to transfer the grief from the house to the tomb. This was exactly what Jesus knew would happen. Everybody would follow Mary and Martha. Jesus planned it this way as Mary, Martha and the Jews were headed outside of Bethany to the place where Jesus was.

Now history was repeated when Mary arrived where Jesus was. Mary’s first thing to do when she got to where Jesus was, was to fall at His feet where she blurted out the identical words Martha had said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” She was saying in essence, “Lord, You could have stopped it all. Lazarus’ death didn’t need to happen. Martha and I didn’t need to have to weep like we’ve been weeping. This whole scene You could have stopped.” Now remember that Mary didn’t make it to Jesus alone, but doubtless with Martha came the whole tribe of mourners in the sisters’ house. Why did Martha whisper to Mary? It was doubtless because Martha hoped Mary could have the same experience of being alone with Jesus. It wasn’t going to happen. All the Jews in the house consoling Mary were on her heels. Mary would not have Martha’s experience of talking to Jesus alone. Here at Jesus’ feet, kneeling in reverence before Him, Mary told Jesus exactly what Martha had said. Today’s message is about weeping, and weeping is what we all need to do at times, especially when we come to the Lord’s Table as we do today. Let me share with you today three thoughts about weeping that God wants to use to open our eyes to and to what John 11:35 means, when John wrote, “Jesus wept.”

SHEDDING TEARS/WEEPING IS COMMON TO US ALL IN OUR LIVES.

(I.) Jesus seeing our tears, weeps with us. Notice John 11:31 and 33 where John writes, “When the Jews who were with Mary in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb **to weep** there...When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who had come with her weeping, He was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled.” For the Jews, hearing parents say to children, “don’t cry!” was not a common Jewish expression. The Bible both in the Old and New Testament indicates plainly that the Hebrews, the Jews do not restrain themselves from expressing emotion through weeping as we are often apt to do, or taught to do in America. Weeping was the wheelhouse of the Jews, and obviously, from our text, weeping was part of Jesus’ common experience. If you have been to the wailing wall in Jerusalem, as I

and many of you have been there, weeping is public. Sometimes it is loud wailing, sobbing, crying, groaning, as agonizing tears flow freely after what happened to the Jews in World War II, with 6 million Jews going to their brutal deaths, being shot, systematically murdered, suffering death through privation and starvation, and being placed alive into gas chambers and cremated during the Holocaust.

God honors our tears that we shed here on earth. Psalm 56:8 is poignantly touching to me as David wrote, “You (God) have kept count of my tossings, my wanderings, put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?” Tossings or wanderings is the translation of this Hebrew word “**nowd.**” It could or can mean our tossing back on our bed frequently from side to side on sleepless nights as we often wrestle in thought and prayer. But the other more common rendering of this word that is used only once in the Hebrew Bible speaks of God not only keeping count of the times we toss and turn on our bed, but He keeps track of our wanderings as David did as Saul drove Him from pillar to post, from Gath to the cave of Adullam, to Mizpeh, to the land of Moab, to the forest of Hareth, to Keilah, to the wilderness of Zith, to the wilderness of Maon and to Engedi. The picture of David was that the tears he shed as he ran for his life from king Saul and Israel’s army, though he had been anointed as king, God did not let his tears fall to the ground, to be forgotten.

Instead, in some amazing way, God said He would remember David’s tears and gather them in his lachrymatory—literally, an ancient bottle made of skin. God here made use of a custom all over the middle east of collecting tears shed in a time of calamity and sorrow and preserving them as a memorial of grief. In Jesus’ day, the Romans and Jews knew of the custom in a time of mourning or grief, that a friend would go to one in sorrow and keep wiping away the tears from the eyes of the one they loved, and then squeezing them into a small bottle of glass or pottery as a memorial of their sorrow and friendship. Many of these **lachrymatories** have been found by archaeologists in ancient Rome and across the middle east.

Albert Barnes in his commentary on the Psalms, Volume 2 wrote precious words. He wrote. “These words of David express strong confidence that his tears would be remembered and that they would not be forgotten. All the tears that we shed are remembered by God. If properly shed in sorrow without murmuring or complaining, they will be remembered for our good; if improperly shed with the spirit of complaining and without submission to the Divine will of God, they will be remembered against us. But it is not wrong to weep. David wept, our Savior wept, nature prompts us to weep, and it cannot be wrong to weep if our eye pours out its tears unto God as Job did in Job 16:20, “My eyes pour out tears to God.”

In the New Testament, in the Greek language, there are eight words used speaking of weeping, crying, mourning, shedding tears, wailing, bewailing, groaning and sobbing. Let me summarize two of the major words used in the New Testament which define our human response of tears, and speak of how Jesus wept. (1) **Klaio** is used 40 times and means to cry out loud, audibly, like a child cries. The word for Mary possibly going to weep/wail at the tomb is **Klaio**—meaning to cry aloud like

a baby cries. The two words for weeping in verse 33 are the same word—**Klaio**. It literally means to sob. (2) **Dakruon** is used 11 times, and it means to shed tears and weep quietly. In the resurrection story of Jesus, when Mary Magdalene was at the empty tomb, the two angels asked her, “Why are you weeping?” (**dakruon**)—John 20:13. Two verses later, Jesus, risen, mistaken by Mary Magdalene for being the gardener, said to her, “Why are you weeping?” (**dakruon**) Jesus cares about all our weeping. Using this word **dakruon**, in Revelation 7:25, we read of heaven’s promise, “And God shall wipe away every tear-**dakruon**-from their eyes.”

We read in Hebrews 5:7, “In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Why? It is because of Jesus tears, that our tears will be wiped away.

SHEDDING TEARS WITH US IS JESUS’ WAY OF SHARING OUR PAIN.

(II.) Look again with me at Jesus’ response to all the crying in Bethany, we note in verse 33-34, “When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled. And He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” Now let’s examine two more ways of weeping in Jesus that show the depth of His emotion in the presence of death, dying, grief and uncontrolled weeping.

(3) **Embrimaomai** – used 5 times, is what Jesus did in verse 34, Jesus was moved in His spirit, groaning. This word means to feel inner groaning, inner pain, turmoil, deep emotion, sorrow, sadness, poverty of spirit, anger, and suffering. Every emotional part of Jesus being was aroused by all the weeping and wailing.

Embrimaomai is most often used of the emotions of a horse agitated, and of that horse snorting. A kind of involuntary groan was wrung from Jesus’ heart. Jesus on this day, allowed Himself to feel Mary and Martha’s trouble as He allows Himself daily to feel our trouble. The hymnwriter put it, “In every pang that rends the heart, The Man of Sorrows had a part.”

Hebrews 7:25 tells us “Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus was sad because He lost His dear friend, the one He loved. But there’s more here. Jesus identified with Mary and Martha, Lazarus’ two sisters, But there’s more still. Jesus felt the transcendent pain of being the God-Man, feeling the cosmic pain of being surrounded by many unbelievers, representing a nation of unbelievers whom He came to save, and His own received Him not, John 1:11. They refused to believe and receive Him. Jesus standing there in Bethany, understood how severe this loss was when people stand in the presence of death, and He knew the pain that we feel when a loved one dies who refuses to receive Him, and is bound for hell. This was a time of massive agony for Jesus. This was a precursor to Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane. Jesus stood there in front of unbelievers

feeling the pain of unbelief and its horrendous result, and what was coming for hundreds of onlookers if they would not believe in Him. But there is still more, another crying word, (4) **Tarasso**, which means an inner disturbance, of water roiling and boiling inside us. It means to stir up or agitate for we read “He was greatly troubled.” This is a provocative word describing the crying on the inside in Jesus that was starting to make Him tremble on the outside. Have you wept and started to tremble. Sometimes my lips start to tremble when I preach because I feel the weight of the words God has laid on my heart to preach, which are prophetic, which are true, but as I tremble, I am about to burst into tears.

In this inner weeping and agitation of spirit, Jesus asked, “Where have you laid him?—v. 34, and the Jews said, in essence. “Follow us to the cave, v. 38 where the stone is before the door. (v. 38) “Come and see.” Had we been there, we would have seen the intensity of Jesus’ emotion, visible not only in His face, in His tone, but in His deep sighing. Indignant with sin and the wages of sin, which is death, Jesus was deeply moved in His spirit, and visibly agitated. Jesus in this **tarasso** shows us that He, God the Son has His very heart wrung with anguish in the anguish of His own people. Jesus in the most literal way is afflicted with all our afflictions. In love, Jesus shows us He is bringing the good news of the God who truly cares for us. Jesus now began to move towards His task He planned when He said of Lazarus, in verse 4, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

What is all this troubling, trembling anguishing groaning all about. It is first of all, all about Jesus deepest desire in His plan to raise Lazarus from the dead. First of all, sadly, Jesus never had the full belief of His own disciples. When Jesus remained in Perea and waited to go to Bethany, He said to His disciples in John 11:5, “For your sake, I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.” Jesus also had the results of raising Lazarus on His mind when He reminded Martha of what He told her in verse 25, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.” Jesus in our next section of Lazarus’ resurrection answered Martha’s words about Lazarus already stinking, reminded her in v. 40, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” There remains a fifth word about weeping that climaxes this text.

SHEDDING TEARS FOR US OVER OUR UNBELIEF AND SORROW, LEADS JESUS TO UNCONTROLLABLE BURSTS OF TEARS FOR US.

(III.) Notice now the climax of our message is found in John 11:35-38. “Jesus wept. So, the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible. Now we wonder what Greek word John used to describe Jesus weeping. It is used only once in the Bible. (5) **Dakruo** means to burst into a flood of tears. Jesus was not weeping loudly as the mourners were weeping and wailing. But tears gushed out of His eyes in the presence of death, unbelief, and this quiet outpouring of tears showed everyone how deep His

love for Lazarus was. The very reason Jesus came into the world was at stake. Jesus was also shedding tears over the wages of sin and death. The wages of unbelief, that prompted His agitation, His trembling, and now His gush of tears. There should always be in us an outrage against sin, not only in others, but in ourselves. We would expect people to act and talk like they do outside the fold of God, outside the church, but do we not feel the agitation in our spirits when we act in sin, in shame, in unforgiveness, in unloving acts and words against each other?

We are told we can grieve, blaspheme, resist, and quench the Holy Spirit—We are told in Ephesians 4:30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the Day of redemption.” The Greek word for grieve is **lupeo** which means to distress, to make sad, sorry, or to make the heart of the Holy Spirit heavy. 77Some people blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in Matthew 12:31-32, “And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is attributing to Satan the works of Christ as the Pharisees did. We can resist the Holy Spirit as the Jews did, John 1:11, Acts 7:51 tells us Stephen as he was being stoned told the Pharisees, “You always resist the Holy Spirit.” We can also quench the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 5:19, “Do not quench the Spirit.” The Greek word is **sbennumi** which means tragically to extinguish, to put out the work of the Spirit by working out our own will, not His. That day Jesus faced a crowd doing all four of these acts.

No wonder Jesus wept. No wonder tears rolled down His cheeks unbidden, like a flood. Jesus wept. Seldom have I ever known such unbidden tears except when Jinny and I were at Golgotha, and I heard the narrator tell of the soldiers crossing Jesus legs on the cross and driving one nail through both ankles into the cross. Suddenly my eyes sprayed my glasses so I could not see. Jesus wept. Behold how He loved Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and behold how He loves you and me. But the tears were far more than tears for M, M, and L. This rush of tears was for the reality of sin, death, unbelief, and judgment in hell that was behind the scene. There at the edge of the tomb is Jesus, quietly sobbing. What was about to happen would astound all Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Perea and Decapolis. What was about to happen would lead, v. 45, “many to believe in Him,” but also lead the Pharisees now to plot Jesus’ crucifixion. Lazarus resurrection would be the last straw before they would demand of Pilate, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.”

As I close this message on weeping, I close with the words John Mark Hall, the lead singer in Casting Crowns sings in “Just Be Held.” “So, when you're on your knees and answers seem so far away, you're not alone, stop holding on, and just be held. Your world's not falling apart; it's falling into place, I'm on the throne, stop holding on and just be held, Just be held, just be held. If your eyes are on the storm, You'll wonder if I love you still. But if your eyes are on the cross, You'll know I always have, and I always will, And not a tear is wasted, In time, you'll understand, I'm painting beauty with the ashes, Your life is in My hands.” Amen.