**JESUS WEPT**

You no doubt have heard that John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible. At the tomb of Lazarus, seeing His dear friends Mary and Martha weeping, John tells us, “*Jesus wept*.” In that two-word sentence is packed an entire volume of information about our Lord.

It seems only natural to weep at a funeral, especially when the victim was one that others said, “*See how he loved him*.” But it seems strange that Jesus would cry when He knew what was about to happen. He had already told the apostles that He was going to Bethany “*that you may believe*” (11:14). This was a clear reference to Lazarus’ resurrection. Likewise, He told both Mary and Martha in no uncertain terms “*I am the resurrection and the life*!” – a reference to what He was about to do.

So why did Jesus weep? Why did John write “*when Jesus saw her (Mary) weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled*” (11:33)?

One obvious answer is that Jesus had ***compassion***. Like Paul later wrote, we are to “*rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep*” (Romans 12:15). Jesus came to earth to experience all the human emotions we experience. “*We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses*…” (Hebrews 4:15). He came to be “*a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief … He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*” (Isaiah 53:3-4).

The Hebrew writer condensed Jesus’ life down to this statement: “*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*” (Hebrews 5:7). Later, looking over the city that would be leveled to the ground in 40 years, Jesus wept and said these words: “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing*!” (Matthew 23:37). In short, Jesus came to show the world that He cares. The hymn says it best:

“Does Jesus care when I’ve said goodbye to the dearest on earth to me;
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks, is it aught to Him, does He see?”

Answer: “Oh yes He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares!”

But, there has to be more to Jesus weeping than sympathy for our sorrows. Besides His compassion, Jesus was considering the ***cost*** He was about to pay in order to raise Lazarus, and us, from the dead. To be “*the resurrection and the life*” He had to first offer His own body as a sacrifice. Yes, He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, but read the rest of the verse: “*Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted*.” (Isaiah 53:4). Read on in Isaiah 53… “*It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief … He shall see the labor of His soul and be satisfied*” (vs. 10-11). Jesus wept, not just at the tomb of Lazarus, but in the Garden of Gethsemane when He was “*put to grief*” and God saw “*the labor of His soul*.” Luke 22:44 describes this scene: *And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”*

As Jesus wept at Lazarus’ tomb He saw a foreshadowing of His own death just one week away. God, who has seen every funeral on earth since Cain killed Abel, sent His Son to conquer death (I Corinthians 15:26). We ask that great question that Paul asked, “*Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death*?” (Romans 7:24). We ask another painful question at every family or friend’s funeral: “*O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory*?” (I Corinthians 15:54).

Do you have an answer? Jesus does. He wept, knowing that in order to conquer death He was sealing His own death warrant. He died so that Lazarus, and all of us, might live. “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus*” (I Thessalonians 4:14).

In these days where we see the world gripped with he fear of death from a virus we cannot see, let us who have named the name of Jesus live with confidence and joy. Jesus once wept at a funeral to show His compassion for us. But He also wept knowing the cost He would soon pay to free us from the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14 comforts us in these perilous times:

*“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and* ***release those who through fear of death*** *were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”*

Jesus wept. Thank God He did. For now I am released from the fear of death. So are you. So today, smile, God loves you, and Jesus cares.

Rick