

Jesus Wept

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John 11:35

This is Memorial Day weekend. The holiday in which Americans remember those who gave their lives for the freedoms we enjoy. Most celebrations or activities of this weekend are really not about soldiers dying, but that is the reason for this holiday. So, death is actually the point of interest. Thankfully, though, Americans take the occasion to celebrate liberty also. But we ought not to forget that this holiday would not exist if it had not been set aside to give some thought to the sacrifices made by our nation's heroes; especially those who gave their lives for liberty. And we are bound to remember that where such sacrifices have happened, loved ones have been left behind to mourn those who gave, and to live their lives without those who gave.

In this shortest of bible verses, we are made clearly aware of the fact that our Savior was truly the sympathetic Son of Man. We meet here with the plain scriptural message that He feels our grief and has sympathy with His people in their sorrow. In this portion of New Testament scripture, our Savior acts out what the prophet **Isaiah** said of him in the **53rd chapter, verse 3**: "...a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief..." Truly, Jesus Christ knows far more than we can ever know about empathy for those who suffer, those who experience loss, those who have pain in their lives; especially those who have such pain because of the loss to death of those they love.

I stood beside the coffin of Bro. Garner Smith this past week and saw evidence of that pain. I watched the widow of Bro. Smith go through the funeral knowing the loss of her husband; I watched the tears flow from a daughter who was bowed with the pain of loss, saw the tears of friends and family, could not help but shed tears myself, and I felt a small bit of that which my Savior felt in His experiences of facing the grief brought by the death of loved ones. It was this event that brought home to me the sermon Jesus preached on this day that He looked around him at Lazarus' survivors and understood the circumstances that brought the sorrow, the tears, the grief, the misgivings.

Now, as a contrast, we want to be reminded that just a short time after this weeping of our Lord, He called Lazarus forth from the grave (**v.43**). We also want to remember that as He stood there weeping, He knew that Lazarus would shortly be restored to those mourners. So, we are forced to confess that His weeping could not have been because of the helplessness nor hopelessness of the situation. We know that Lazarus' sisters were mourning their loss, but if we think about it, we realize that Jesus would not be mourning a loss that he knew was going to be reversed; also, the trip to the grave by a born again believer was not a loss to Him. So, what made Him cry? Almost anyone might be drawn to conclude that it had something to do with Lazarus' death; and it was, but not in a way perhaps, that most people think about it. Because, He knew His friend would shortly be walking and talking among his family again. So, we might be driven to suspect that Christ's weeping could have been more about the bare reality of death rather than about the singular incident of Lazarus' death. If we come to this conclusion, I think we will have broken

through a secret door and entered into some deeper truths that our Savior dealt with in His earthly life. Having insights as the Son of God, and knowing man through and through, I think He understood things about this moment and what it represented that few men stop to think about when they are forced to deal with death. That is the subject of our message. What was Christ dealing with in this deeply sorrowful moment when He wept? What was it He must have contemplated about death at this hour?

I. Christ Knew the Magnitude of Grief and Despair Death Had Imposed Upon Mankind

- He had been conversant with Adam, and had instructed him about what he could expect now that he had sinned. It was Christ the Word of God who detailed to Adam and Eve what negative things faced them in the world after their spiritual death (**Genesis 3**): this included sorrow in childbirth and sorrow in making a living. Then, there would be death and returning to the dust. It is no wonder that the very experience of death always has the shadow of grief and despair.
- As Jesus looked upon the things brought on by Lazarus's death among these kinfolks and friends, He must have contemplated the legacy of death; the grief and despair that comes to all humans who have only carnal comfort, or who can see only as far as life here on earth because of their grief.
- What I really think we see here though, is the real grief of a Savior who knows the fullness of human grief not just for or about one person (Lazarus) but for mankind as a creature who had once been in a state where grief or despair could never reach.
- Jesus wept.

II. Christ Knew the Hopeless and Helpless State of Men Facing Death

- Job spoke of this legacy of death, its inevitability and how humans are helpless before it:
 - > **Job 4:19-21** He spoke of humans as dwelling "...in houses of clay, whose foundation *is* in the dust, *which* are crushed before the moth? **20** They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish forever without any regarding *it*. **21** Doth not their excellency *which is* in them go away? they die, even without wisdom."
 - > Job asked also this very pointed question: **Job 14:14** "If a man die, shall he live *again*?"
 - > David speaks of the finality of death and how little humans can do about it: **Psalms 104:29** "...thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust."
 - > Solomon articulates the finality and powerlessness of humans when facing death: **Ecc. 8:8** "*There is* no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither *hath he* power in the day of death: and *there is* no discharge in *that* war..."
- Jesus, the Word itself, certainly knew that day why these people were so burdened. He knew why Martha and Mary had said to Him "if you had been here Lazarus would not have died."
 - > They were in the thrall of the perceived helplessness of death.
 - > But, He saw more - He saw that this had been and was, the mental state of all humanity under the awful sentence of death.
 - > I believe there was even something more that the all knowing Master saw. I believe He was aware of the loss of nobility of the lineage of Adam that had occurred because death entered in.
 - The immortal suddenly brought to this and experiencing it for all generations
 - The royal creature depreciated to the level of animals by the shame associated with death by sin

- The creature flesh which had been made perfect, sound, and lasting suddenly brought to this shameful state where it must stop living and rot in the ground.

III. Christ Knew That There Was an Answer to The Grief, Despair, Hopelessness, Helplessness, but Understanding It Escaped the Human Creature

- Has anyone you have ever known discovered a human solution to death and all it brings?
- We can make a case for the fact that Jesus Christ grieved about sin and its effects among human kind:
 - > **Gen. 6:5-6** And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. **6** And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.
 - > **Luke 19:41-42** “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, **42** Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”
 - (Note: in this verse, notice He mentions that the things which would have changed everything for them are hid from their eyes).
 - > Jesus Christ has known grief about the fallen state, the blindness, and the death that has afflicted His creation.
 - > Even His people are made small by death’s legacy.
 - Like Martha and Mary, the very terror of death has narrowed their vision (they could not see that Christ could have raised Lazarus from afar; this was a result of the overwhelming sense of powerlessness in the face of death)

IV. Conclusion

- There is a balm for hopelessness, helplessness, despair, sorrow that accompanies the terrible condition of death that has its hold upon human kind.
- The balm is knowledge of escape from the sentence and finality of death; escape from the idea that death is inescapable
- That knowledge is to know Christ
 - > This is the legacy of Christ: **Heb 2:14-15** Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; **15** And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
 - That is why Paul could say (**1Cor. 15:55**) O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?