

Jesus Wept
John 11:1-45
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When someone doesn't cry very often, their tears really get your attention. My father teared up often, but my mother hardly ever cried. When she did, you knew something had really upset her. Well in the entire Bible, our Gospel text for today is one of the only times a member of the Trinity ever sheds a tear.

However, Scripture does say that God is close to the brokenhearted (like in Psalm 34:18.)

Jesus weeping at the death of Lazarus and at the grief of his sisters Mary and Martha, even though he knew the end of the story teaches us so much. His tenderness, love and compassion were abundant. Even though Jesus knew that Lazarus would live again, he did not write off the grief of his friends or his own grief at the brokenness of the world and the suffering of humanity.

Yes Jesus wept, and this is a great lesson to us. We can weep too. We can weep for our own grief and there is no shame. We can weep for and with others because this is one of the greatest gifts we can give to one another. Compassion.

Jesus doesn't shy away from the suffering or brokenness of the world; he faces it with tears streaming down his face.

I love to watch the worship services of Madison Avenue Presbyterian in New York City. I attended there for a year 1999/2000. I find it kind of nostalgic to watch. Their senior pastor Rev. Dr. J Patrick Vaughn

shared an illustration that stopped me in my tracks a few weeks ago. In the movie Charly, a man who struggled to learn to read somehow becomes a genius after participating in a scientific experiment. Charly re-entered the world in a new way. One day he goes to a bar with his friends after work, and a waiter stumbles and drops a very full tray; the whole bar begins to laugh. Glass shatters everywhere. Charly got down on his hands and knees to help pick up the broken pieces.

I can picture Jesus on his hands and knees helping us pick up the broken pieces of our lives. Jesus said, “I am with you to the end of the age.” As followers of Jesus, with Christ in us, we both know that Jesus cries with us and offers support, and we do the same for others. We can face the suffering and brokenness of the world in ourselves and in others, even with tears streaming down our faces. We can offer compassion and support to those around us.

It is important to me that we really see and accept Jesus weeping. As Christians there is some pressure, like Paul said, “to grieve not as those who have no hope” when someone dies. This has been so misused. We can still grieve, and it is right and human to grieve. Studies show that in America we expect someone to bounce back from a loss of a significant loved one within weeks. WHAT?! My father died 13 years ago, and I can still easily cry about it. Grief is a process, and does not come with a timeline. Please allow yourself to grieve. Jesus did! The Psalmists are filled with lament and grief. We are made in the image of God and not in the image of the Stoic philosophers who put down a display of emotion. Please hear today that your emotions are welcome.

Please also hear today that there is more to life than GRIEF. There is immense HOPE. So much hope. Jesus waited until Lazarus had been

dead for 4 days before he came to Bethany. Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Lazarus of course would die again. He was given an extension of life on earth. But resurrection happened. New life happened. It was messy. Resurrection happened in the midst of death. Little resurrections happen in our lives. New life happens. It is not always extravagant, but as Christians we are raised to life again and again in little ways in new beginnings, in transformation, in hope.

Wilda Gafney says, "We are raised to life in the same old world. Life in Jesus happens among the brokenness, failings and limitations of the physical world."

We follow a weeping Messiah with deep conviction and hope in his heart.

I'd like to close with a prayer written by Arianne Braithwaite Lehn and published in the Presbyterian Outlook:

Loving, Creator God,

Spring reminds me it's
never too late to start over.
That there's been quiet growth
over these long months
of winter when I saw nothing.
When I was called to believe
there was growth happening
beneath hard, cold soil.

And now? Glory!

I celebrate the loveliness
of all you've made.
The newness, Lord,
the freshness—
it inspires my soul!

Tulips in the front yard,
buds on the trees,
the voices of birds,
the cleansing of rain,
the comfort of sunshine...
Each gift renews me,

speaking of the promise within
all those months of dormancy
and preparation.

As spring awakens my physical senses,
I ask, God, for you to awaken my inner senses.

May my mind open and blossom
to the longings you've placed within me...
to the steps and path that will
satisfy the desires of my heart...
to the hopes and passions
you've planted in every
one of your children...

May I seek what will truly fulfill them.
May I journey toward their Source.
May I be guided by your gentle and wise Spirit.

It is never too late to be
what you call me to be.
Even as it takes greatest courage
and deepest humility.

With your help, I will open myself to
what I never expected before,
never experienced before,
and never thought possible.

Amen.