

8.21.2022 Trinity 10 (Luke 19:41-47)

*“And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it...”* (Luke 19:41).

The Gospels record two instances in which Jesus wept. In the passage we read this morning, our Lord wept aloud as He beheld the beautiful city of Jerusalem, thought of His beloved people there, and spoke about how terribly they would suffer at the time of its coming destruction by the Romans in the year AD 70. On another occasion, we're told that Jesus wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus. St. Luke writes about Jesus being *“deeply moved in spirit and troubled”* (Luke 11:33) when He saw Lazarus' two sisters, Martha and Mary, and those who had come with them to the tomb weeping and mourning. Then, in the shortest verse of the Bible, Luke states, *“Jesus wept”* (Luke 11:35).

These verses from Holy Scripture that describe Almighty God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, weeping, are an opportunity for us to learn an intimate detail about the nature of God, for these passages compel us to ask this question: What is it that grieves the heart of God so terribly that it could bring our Lord to tears? That's the question I would ask you to consider this morning, and as you consider that question, notice all of the things that do not cause our Lord to shed a tear. The Bible speaks of Jesus being mocked, spit on, and rejected; scourged, beaten, and crowned with thorns. He was forced to carry His own Cross, they nailed Him to it, then watched Him suffer and die.

The pain and misery Jesus endured was beyond anything we can imagine, yet the insults and the unthinkable suffering of His passion and death brought no tears. The prophet Isaiah wrote about our Lord's crucifixion, telling us that *“His appearance was disfigured beyond that of any man, and His form marred beyond human likeness”* (Isaiah 52:14), but nowhere does the Bible say Jesus wept when He suffered for us. In fact, the writer to the Hebrews describes Jesus as *“the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross...”* (Hebrews 12:2). It appears there is a very real sense in which we could say that the only kind of tears Jesus would have shed as He suffered and died for you, would be tears of joy shed for the *finished* (John 19:30) work of your Salvation.

As far as we know, the unimaginable suffering of our Lord's Passion brought

no tears, and so we ask, If all that didn't make Jesus weep, what was it that caused the tears to flow as He beheld Jerusalem? What grieved God's heart so terribly at the tomb of His friend Lazarus? Only God knows with complete certainty, but when we consider the instances in the Gospels in which Jesus wept there are two things these events clearly have in common: Human suffering and death.

Consider the passage we read today. In this Gospel, Jesus beheld the city of Jerusalem and wept over it, saying, *"Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation"* (Luke 19:42-44).

These verses describe the future of the great city, and of God's chosen people. They describe our Lord crying aloud in anguish over the thought of the gruesome siege in which the Romans would destroy the Temple and kill more than 1,000,000 people in Jerusalem. Earlier in Luke's Gospel, Jesus had said, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it"* (Luke 13:34). Jesus came to save, He longed to gather His chosen people to Himself, but they rebelled and scattered.

His own people demanded His crucifixion, and in return, Jesus revealed the heart of God to them. He revealed His compassion for the suffering and the lost as He wept for them, as He prayed for them from the Cross, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34), and then offered His life for them. Notice, the torture and shame of His passion and death brought no tears, but the mere thought of the way those who put Him there would suffer, caused our Lord to weep.

This passage reveals God's unconditional love for each and every one of us, His heart for the hurting, His Divine compassion for human suffering, and at the tomb of Lazarus, again, we find the heart of God revealed in the midst of suffering and death. At the tomb Jesus was met by Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, and many of their friends who had gathered to comfort them (John

11:19). Scripture tells us that both Martha and Mary used the same words when they saw our Lord. They cried out to Him saying, “*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died*” (John 11:21, 32), and that Jesus, when He 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.” Jesus wept. So the Jews said, “See how He loved him!”*” (John 11:33-36).

We see how He loved him. We see how He loved the people of Jerusalem. We see how He loves us, and isn't it remarkable that St. John, who begins his Gospel by emphasizing the Divinity of our Lord, writing, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1), isn't it remarkable that in this passage St. John focuses directly on the humanity of our Lord by describing the Eternal Word of God, who was with God, who was God in the beginning, in tears. St. John, the Gospel writer who is often portrayed as the one who focuses on the Divinity of Christ, in this passage clearly reveals the humanity of our Lord. He employs the words of his Gospel to reveal the truth that our Lord is the God of Heaven and Earth, the Creator and Sustainer of all things (John 1; Hebrews 1; Colossians 1), and then through our Lord's tears, John shows us that “*we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses*” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus, our Lord and our God can truly “*weep with those who weep*” (Romans 12:15).

Jesus weeps with those who weep, and the passages we considered today reveal the truth that what grieves the heart of God so terribly that it brings Him to tears is human suffering and death. The Gospels provide us with this picture of God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is able to, without tears, boldly confront the most unthinkable pain and misery when it is inflicted on Him, yet even the thought of His people suffering, and most certainly the experience of the death of His friend Lazarus, brought Him to tears. It is our pain that causes our Lord to weep.

The tears of our Savior provide us not only with a vivid picture of God's love for us, but tangible evidence of “*the breadth and length and height and depth*” (Ephesians 3:18) of His love and compassion. The unconditional love and divine compassion that moved our Lord to leave His throne in heaven to be born in a manger, to live the life of a peasant, to suffer and die and rise to new life in order to confront and conquer suffering and death, for the Son of

God in tears is the same God who will on the Last Day “*wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever*” (Revelation 21:4).