

John 11

Jesus Wept

Jesus wept.

The shortest sentence in the whole Bible.

And a sentence that tells us a lot about God.

Why did Jesus begin to cry?

He loved Lazarus.

Lazarus' sister's, Mary and Martha, sent Jesus a message:

“Lord, the one you love is ill.”

Maybe Jesus wept because his good friend had died.

Maybe he wept out of compassion for Mary and Martha
and all their friends who consoled them.

Maybe he wept for the unbelief of his people who would reject him,
and then suffer at the hands of the Romans when Jerusalem
would be destroyed.

Maybe he wept for himself.

Staring at the stone rolled in front of Lazarus' tomb
may have brought home the stark reality of the suffering
and agonizing death he would soon face on the Cross in Jerusalem.

Maybe he wept for joy that Lazarus was about to be raised from the dead.
And the joy of his own resurrection that would offer new life to everyone.

Maybe the tears were a combination of all those things
that bring tears to our eyes:
grief, compassion, sorrow, and joy

I'm glad Jesus didn't suck it up and bottle up his raw emotions.
I'm glad Jesus didn't go off to a quiet place and compose himself.
I'm glad he didn't tell everyone to calm down or to get over it.

If the injustice of the world ever makes you angry;
If the suffering in the world ever makes you sad;
If separation from someone you love by death or other means
ever makes you feel grief
then know you are not alone. God feels these things, too.

I was watching the movie *Antwone Fisher* the other day.
Antwone Fisher is a man who had a difficult childhood.
His father was a drifter and was murdered before he was born.

His mother was a drug addict and he was born while she was in prison
and then he spent his early life in foster homes.
He never knew anyone in his family.
What he experienced in one of the foster homes
should never happen to any child.

Antwone joined the Navy and did his best to walk the straight and narrow.
He was an intelligent and honest man.
But, he had anger issues.
His mother was released from prison but he was still a prisoner to his past.

In certain situations his anger would boil to the surface and
he would lash out in violence, get into fights.
He was on the brink of being discharged from the Navy
when an officer told him his last chance was to see a psychiatrist.

He thought it was a waste of time but he went.
Over time they developed a close relationship
and his psychiatrist became sort of a father figure to Antwone
and he invited him to a Thanksgiving dinner in his home.
During dinner, not knowing Antwone's background,
someone asked him if he missed his Mama's cooking
while he was in the Navy.
Antwone brushed it off but the man wouldn't let go of it and finally
Antwone excused himself from the table
When his emotions got the better of him.

The psychiatrist came into the other room to see if Antwone was OK.
During their conversation, Antwone told him that he wrote a poem
that he wanted to give him.

Part of the poem said,
"Who will cry for the little boy?
Who will cry?"

The psychiatrist asked him, "Who *will* cry for the little boy, Antwone?"
Antwone said, "I will, sir. I always do."

The movie ends on a happy note.
The psychiatrist urges him to deal with his past and find his mother.
And while he doesn't reconcile with her,
 he does discover a loving extended family of aunts and uncles
 and cousins that helps him to heal.

When I was watching the movie, when it got to the part
 where Antwone reads the poem and says,
 "Who will cry for the little boy? Who will cry?"
I had to get up and take a break and go for a walk.

Like Antwone, there was something in my past that made me
 sad and angry when I thought about certain memories.
I had heard people say that one method of healing prayer
 is to pray and envision Jesus being with you during a time
 in your past that was painful.
A form of healing of memories.

I thought about that and to be honest, it didn't do any good for me.
I don't mean to be irreverent or disrespectful to God but
 my gut level feeling was,
"If you were there during that time, well, so what?"
I didn't see any connection to my experience and
 Jesus being there looking on at the time.

And then it occurred to me.
He was not only there looking on as an interested observer.
When I wept, he wept for me.
And when I wept, he wept with me.

My healing took place when I realized that I never was alone,
 I never have been alone,
 even during those time when I felt alone.

"Who will cry for the little boy? Who will cry?"
Jesus. He will cry.
And when I realized that, it didn't hurt any longer

Another thing I really like about Jesus is what he does *not* do
 after Lazarus is brought back from the dead.

He doesn't draw attention to himself or rush up to Lazarus
and tell everyone, "See, I told you I could do this."
He doesn't even remove the strips of cloth wrapped around Lazarus'
feet and hands and face.
He tells his followers, "Unbind him, and let him go."
The power of the resurrection, the glory of God,
is manifested through Jesus.
But, the people are the ones who unwrap the cloth strips from Lazarus.

Jesus left the work of the church to us.
When the church is the church,
we help one another become unbound to live a new life in Christ.
We help one another walk in the light.

And in doing so, we help each other continue to believe in the reality
of the resurrection of Jesus Christ
and live into the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
who in his own words, 'has overcome the world.'

Being a Christian doesn't mean we will never feel sadness, grief
or loneliness.
Being a Christian does mean that we never have to be alone in our sadness,
grief or loneliness.
Jesus knew all these things and is with us in all these things.

And he is both the head and the foundation of the church
so that we might be as Christ to each other
through all these things.

Jesus wept.
And Jesus came to make his joy in us complete.

So as Paul says,
"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."
God does.