



Luke 23:26-31

MW Lent 2, March 12, 2025

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Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. ²⁷ And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. ²⁸ But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ "For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' ³⁰ "Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ³¹ "For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"

The Sounds of the Passion:

The Sound of Weeping Over Jesus' Suffering

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus, who will one day **"wipe away every tear from [our] eyes"** (Revelation 7:17), dear fellow redeemed,

I currently live in a house with four children under the age of 10. As such, the sound of weeping is a pretty common thing for me to hear. I'm sure those of you with small children can relate as well. From the first whines in the morning to those final bumps and bruises just before bed, crying can be heard pretty consistently in my house.

At a certain point though, we expect our children to grow up, to mature, to develop more control over their emotions, and hopefully to gain better motor control that will result in less owies.

So, when we see an adult crying it generally indicates a deeper level of grief and calls for warm understanding and compassion upon the person who is in distress, especially when that person is a woman.

The Sound of Weeping Over Jesus' Suffering

Which is what makes this text so surprising. Gentle, compassionate Jesus who just a few verses after our text prays **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"** (Luke 23:34), has a pretty harsh rebuke for this group of weeping women.

Is this because Jesus is anti-women? Quite the contrary!

While the scribes and Pharisees at the time would ignore women in public, Jesus was known to talk with them openly. Jesus befriended a Samaritan woman, a Syro-Phoenician woman, even known sinners and prostitutes. Not to mention the fact that history's greatest event, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was first made known to women. To Mary Magdalene weeping at the tomb and later to the other woman on the way back to Jerusalem.

A woman's tears may bring out the best or the worst in men. They may win where other means have failed. They have the strength to pierce a stone heart. Yet when these women of Jerusalem wept over Jesus, it was in vain.

He says, **"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves."**

Does that sound hard and ungrateful of Jesus? After all, up until this point in the morning Jesus had been hearing lies told about him and shouts from the crowd of **“Crucify Him, Crucify Him!” (Luke 23:21)**. So why would He refuse their tender sympathy?

There are many times in the Scriptures when Jesus was moved by the distress of others. He knew the sorrow of Jairus for his sick daughter, of the widow at Nain for her dead son, of a sister for her dead brother. Compassion is one of the essential parts of Jesus’ ministry.

Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus because of the consequences that sin had on the world that He had made. Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem because this capital of the chosen people of God had rejected Him and His prophets over and over.

So why not allow these women to weep over him during this time of great suffering and anguish?

Sometimes there are those who try to use their tears to make a spectacle for attention or to try to manipulate others. Those tears are not genuine. They are fake.

Public mourning among the Jews at the time of Jesus was a noisy affair. Death was announced with loud shrieks. Neighbors were invited to the house to lament, and mourners were sometimes hired to help maintain the ongoing cries.

Jesus had no time for showy, shallow tears. Outside the home of Jairus, He says, **“Why make this commotion and weep” (Mark 5:39)**.

But the women’s weeping was genuine. It was against Roman law to mourn a criminal on his way to execution. We don’t see any of the twelve disciples here. And so, this action could have cost the women their freedom or their very lives. It was actually a most courageous thing to do.

Jesus didn’t want their pity because Jesus didn’t need their pity.

There are some people who thrive on pity. Are you one of these? People who are never content unless they are whining and complaining about their problems, expecting someone to share their self-pity. People who are not content with the position or possessions God has given them in life and so they grumble and gripe.

Not so, Jesus on the way to the cross would not have Himself pitied as a victim. He wasn’t looking for an escape from the cross. It was His will to die. In John 10 we read, **“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father” (John 10:17-18)**.

As we consider the weeping of the women on the way to Calvary, let us remember that we do not follow Jesus out of a sense of pity. We are not disciples of Christ because we feel bad for Him or out of a sense of charity. We follow Jesus because He is our **“Captain of Salvation” (Hebrews 2:10)**. Because He is the **“Author and Finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2)**.

The horrific visage of the beaten, bruised, and battered Jesus Christ shuffling His way to Calvary was dreadful enough to cause these women to weep. But make no mistake! Jesus is not a dead man

walking. He is marching to war. To war with sin. To war with death.

As we look around at the Christian church today, how easy it is to despair. It seems as though sin and death are still winning. It looks like the culture is becoming more and more corrupt, straying further and further away from God and His Word and will.

But, dear Christian, we do not belong to a dying cause. We have no reason to weep, rather we have every reason to rejoice! Jesus was marching to war. A war He intended to win. And win He did! His suffering and death on the cross marked, not defeat, but victory. Victory over sin. Victory over death.

And so, Jesus says, **“do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”** Jesus is calling the women, and He is calling us to weep, not in despair or in self-pity, but rather to tears of repentance. Tears that show a willingness to bear responsibility and the consequences of evil in our own lives. For it is our sin that put Jesus there on the road to Calvary. It is our guilt that He bore.

The lesson of the women weeping over Jesus is this: Let us weep, not for Jesus as though He is a victim in need of our pity. Let us weep for the same reason as Jesus. We read in Luke 19 the account of Jesus on Palm Sunday

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44)

The consequence for the Jewish people's rejection of Jesus Christ was fulfilled by General Titus and Roman armies in 70AD. Jerusalem was put under siege and the resulting starvation and destruction have been documented as one of the most gruesome catastrophes in the history of mankind.

This is why Jesus warns in the final verses of our text **"For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"**

For the Jews, a childless marriage was a tragedy. But Jesus is saying that the woman without a child will be better off. Jesus is saying that that people will wish their lives could be ended by a mountain falling on them. Jesus is saying that if they are doing this to the innocent Jesus, how much more terrible will it be for the guilty.

The daughters of Jerusalem had to learn, as do all of us, that how we view Jesus and His suffering is of utmost importance both in our studies of His Passion this year and as we meditate upon Him throughout our lives.

Far from being a broken victim whom we mourn, Jesus strides ahead as both conqueror and king.

May God open each of our eyes of faith to see Him so. In Jesus' strong and saving name, Amen!