



Life Begins at Easter

Text: John 11:1-44

Founding Pastor Ken Werlein

1. Despite all our differences, all of us have at least one thing in common: disappointment, and hard times, and suffering come to all of us because we live in a broken and fallen world.
 - a. What is the biggest trial or challenge you are facing in your life right now? In what specific ways is life not turning out as you had planned or hoped for?
 - b. How has this trial been affecting you? Emotionally? Relationally? Mentally? Physically? Spiritually?
 - c. It is natural to ask, “why?” when these things happen. However, we don’t always get to fully know the answer this side of Heaven. What might God’s purposes be for not always answering our “why” questions?

2. Read John 11:1-44.
 - a. When Lazarus was sick, Mary and Martha immediately turned to Jesus for help. What is your response when you face trials and suffering? Do you turn to Jesus or something else?
 - b. How was Jesus’s plan better than what Mary and Martha originally would have wanted?
 - c. What encouragement do you find to know that Jesus weeps along with us, even if he does not immediately take away the pain, if he does so at all this side of Heaven?

3. Jesus said his resurrection power is available to all those who believe in him.
 - a. How is true belief different from mere head knowledge and intellectual assent?
 - b. How are you or are you not truly believing in Jesus?
 - c. How can our eternal hope in Jesus make a difference in your life today? How can it reframe your view and response to your current struggles and challenges?

4. Jesus tells Martha, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (11:40). What implication does that have on our lives as believers?

Challenge: Read John 25-26a. Jesus claim and promise here are not just for Martha, but for all people always. Comparing your spiritual life to the story of Lazarus, where are you right now – Still in the grave? Watching the stone being rolled away? Alive but still in the grave clothes? Alive and unwrapped?

Prayer: Risen Lord, be our resurrection and life.

Be the resurrection and the life for us and all whom you have made.

Be the resurrection and the life for those caught in the grip of sin and addiction.

Be the resurrection and the life for those who feel forsaken.

Be the resurrection and the life for those who live as if you do not.

Be the resurrection and the life for those who do not believe they need resurrection and life.

Be the resurrection and the life in churches that believe they are dying, and in successful churches who don't know they are dead.

Be the resurrection and the life in us who know the good but fail to do it, who have not been judged but still judge, who know love but still live for self, who know hope but succumb to despair.

Be the resurrection and the life for those dying of malnutrition and hunger.

Be the resurrection and life for those imprisoned unjustly and those imprisoned justly.

Be the resurrection and life for those who live under regimes that seek to crush all who proclaim resurrection and life.

Be the resurrection and the life for those in the throes of sickness that leads to death.

Be the resurrection and the life in families where the weak are maltreated by the strong.

Be the resurrection and the life in marriages that are disintegrating.

Be the resurrection and the life for women trafficked and enslaved by the forces of wickedness.

Be the resurrection and the life for those whose lives are snuffed out in the womb.

Be the resurrection and the life for anyone anywhere who knows suffering and death in any form, and for Creation itself, which groans in travail.

Be the resurrection and the life in the life we share and the fellowship we enjoy, that filled anew with the wonder of your love and the power of your grace, we may go forth to proclaim your resurrection life to a world in the grip of death and yet on the verge of redemption, a redemption promised by you and assured by what occurred on the first Easter morn.

Amen.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/aprilweb-only/resurrectionprayer.html>

STUDY DEEPER

Why Jesus Wept

The shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35: “Jesus wept.” But for all its grammatical simplicity, it’s packed with unfathomable complexity.

Jesus wept after speaking with Lazarus’s grieving sisters, Martha and Mary, and seeing all the mourners. That seems natural enough. Except that Jesus had come to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead. He knew that in a few short minutes all this weeping would turn to astonished joy, and then tearful laughter, and then worship.

So, one would think that Jesus would be a confident, joyful calm in that storm of sorrow. But he was “greatly troubled” (John 11:33), and he wept. Why?

1. Compassion for Suffering

One reason is simply the deep compassion that Jesus felt for those who were suffering. It is true that Jesus let Lazarus die. He delayed coming, and he did not speak healing from a distance like he did for the centurion’s servant (Matthew 8:13). His reasons were good and merciful and glorious. But this did not mean Jesus took the suffering it caused lightly. “For he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men” (Lamentations 3:33).

Even though Jesus always chooses what will ultimately bring his Father the most glory (John 11:4) – and sometimes, as in Lazarus’s case, it requires affliction and grief – he does not take delight in the affliction and grief itself. No, Jesus is sympathetic (Hebrews 4:15). And as “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), in Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus we get a glimpse of how the Father feels over the affliction and grief his children experience.

2. The Calamity of Sin

“Jesus’s tears give us a glimpse of how the Father feels over the grief of his children.” [Tweet Share on Facebook](#)

Jesus also wept over the calamity of sin. As God the Son who had come into the world to destroy the devil’s works (1 John 3:8), Jesus was about to deliver death its deathblow (1 Corinthians 15:26). But sin grieves God deeply, and so do the wages of sin: death (Romans 6:23). And ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, he had endured sin’s horrific destruction. Death had consumed almost every human being he had created (all except Elijah and Enoch). It had taken Lazarus, and it would take him again before it was all over. Tears of anger and longing were mixed with Jesus’s tears of grief.

3. The Cost of Redemption

A third reason for weeping was the cost that he was about to pay to purchase not only Lazarus's short-term resurrection, but his everlasting life. The cross was just days away, and no one really knew the inner distress Jesus was experiencing (Luke 12:50). Lazarus's resurrection would look and be experienced by Lazarus and everyone else as a gift of grace. But, oh, it was not free. Jesus was going to die a horrific death to purchase it.

And the most horrific part was not crucifixion, as unimaginable as that alone would have been. He was dreading his Father's wrath. Jesus, who had never known sin, was about to become Lazarus's sin, and the sin of all who had or would believe in him, so that in him they would all become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was looking to the joy that was set before him (Hebrews 12:2). But the reality of what lay between was weighing heavily.

4. The Cause of His Own Death

A fourth possible reason for Jesus's tears was that he knew that raising Lazarus would actually cause the religious leaders to finally take action to put him to death (John 11:45–53). In this account, most of us probably marvel at Jesus's incredible trust that his Father would answer him. We have such little faith. If Jesus had any struggle that day, it would not have been whether his Father would answer, but what would result when his Father answered. Calling Lazarus out of the tomb would have taken a different kind of resolve for Jesus than we might have imagined. Giving Lazarus life was sealing Jesus's own death.

“Giving Lazarus life sealed Jesus's own death.” Tweet Share on Facebook

Just these few reasons for Jesus's weeping at Lazarus's tomb give us a glimpse into how God views our suffering and death. His reasons for not sparing us these things are righteous and glorious. But in them he is full of compassion (Psalm 103:13). He hates the calamity sin brings, and he himself has suffered more than we will ever know in order to pay the full cost of our eternal redemption.

“Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (Psalm 30:5). And when that morning comes, “death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore” (Revelation 21:4).

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/why-jesus-wept>