

A SHORT REFLECTION ON JOHN 11:1-45

John 11 offers us a story about new life out of death, the climax of Jesus' ministry and the greatest sign or miracle of them all: the raising of Lazarus.

In this story we read the shortest verse in the Bible – 'Jesus wept'. Have you ever stopped to wonder what could possibly bring tears to the eyes of God? Can you imagine the face of Jesus, moist with his own tears? Are they tears of weakness or of strength? Of fear, or compassion? The Bible records three different times when Jesus cried, each time in a different place and for a different reason.

- At the tomb of Lazarus – Jesus wept for a hurting family.
- At Jerusalem – He wept for a lost city.
- In the Garden of Gethsemane – He wept for a cursed world.

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, you would think that Jesus would be confident, joyful, calm in that storm of sorrow. But he was "greatly troubled" and he wept. Why?

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.

Jesus wept. This verse may be the shortest verse in the bible, but it speaks volumes. It wasn't the death of his friend that pained Jesus, rather it was the tears on Mary's face that brought tears to Christ's.

When Jesus saw that look of sorrow and grief in Mary's eyes, and on the faces of those who were with her, he was overwhelmed with emotion. He sympathized with their pain and he sympathizes with ours too.

Jesus knew that he was going to raise Lazarus. still, he gave way to tears, moved by his deep love and compassion for his friends.

Likewise, our empathy may move us to "weep with people who weep". Expressing such grief does not indicate that a person lacks faith in the resurrection hope.

When you genuinely care about someone, when they hurt, you hurt. Jesus' weeping here shows His true care and love for us. God never takes our pain lightly even if He knows He will restore everything we have lost. Like a good Father, He does not want to see us in pain, even if He knows that pain will lead to a greater good.

Jesus wants us to believe in Him – not to make Himself feel better – but because He knows it's our faith that leads to our salvation and gives us an inner peace and a sense of joy that we can only find in Him.

Have you ever watched 'Call the Midwife'? I wonder if you have noticed that it is only when a new-born baby cries that you know it is alive. Tears are the sign of life.

God is life, therefore God weeps. You have life; therefore you weep. We have new life in Christ; therefore He weeps with us.

The good news of the Gospel is that no one stays in the tomb forever. The good news is that while we are in there, we are not alone. God weeps with us.

We are all facing many challenges at this time caused by the Corona virus. There will be friends, family, neighbours or colleagues who will suffer. But none of us are alone, even if we are in self-isolation. God is with us. God loves you and God loves them.

I truly believe that a lot of good can come out of this crisis. Many people are getting to know their neighbours for the first time. People are beginning to realise what is really important – relationships. God wants us to love him and to love our neighbour. When we don't do that, God weeps.

God bless you. Amen.