

John 11:28-37

28 When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34 He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus began to weep. 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" (NRSV).

We are following the Gospel of John throughout Lent in order to focus on the significance of Jesus' trip to Jerusalem and learn how the death and resurrection of Lazarus is proof of resurrection and correlates with Jesus as God demonstrates the doctrine of love.

While Jesus was two days away from Jerusalem when traveling on foot, word came to him that his close friend Lazarus was sick. Jesus delayed traveling back and when he arrived Lazarus had been dead four days. There is no mistaking his death. By the fourth day all hope is gone. Martha hears that Jesus is coming and she rushes out to greet him. She expresses her disappointment that he did not come to the rescue. She makes the accusation that if he had been there, her brother would not have died. Her attitude is one of blame. She needed him and he wasn't there. She tells Mary that Jesus has arrived and Mary rushes to meet Jesus.

In today's Scripture Mary reaches Jesus and says "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." She has the same attitude and the same comments as her sister Martha did. It's as if when they were alone they were talking over their dissatisfaction that Jesus was not there. So, they ended up complaining about Jesus' absence and began blaming Jesus. When Jesus saw her weeping, he wept real tears. Jesus was moved with compassion for people because Jesus is full of love. That is the point of today's message. Jesus loves the people and cares for the people. After being bombarded with opposition, he comes back to the area that wanted to kill him. This area is sure death for him but instead of concern for himself, he has compassion for the people. People did not understand Jesus. They did not know the extent of his love, who he really is, or what he is really all about. People were consumed with their own lives, wants, and needs. They did not recognize the value of God's love when it was right in front of them. It is because of love that he returned to the danger zone. It is due to love that God sends us Jesus. It is out of love that our sins are forgiven. It is a response of love that caused Jesus to shed some tears.

We all have cried tears, everyone sheds real tears with no exemption. I believe that God sees our tears and knows when we cry and why we cry. I know that God cares. When Jesus cried it shows a very human characteristic. Jesus displays human emotions. The shortest verse in the Bible is Jesus wept (I know this because I watched the Waltons).

The NRSV has it as “Jesus began to weep.” When I think of Jesus I don’t think a lot about him having human tears. I think about the awesome power, healing, miracles, and teaching. That is a short list of what most people would typically think about. However, the man Jesus has the humanistic characteristic of love. Why Jesus physically cried is theologically debatable. The thing that I want to point out is that Jesus cried with her. Jesus cries with us. We cry when we feel pain. For our Lord and Savior to cry is something special. It means the Lord feels our pain. We cry for others when we care for others.

Sometime in the 60’s during the season of Lent, the pastor of a small church announced a special Easter offering for a poor family. One of the families in the church had lost the father years earlier took this fund raising event seriously. They bought 50 pounds of potatoes to live on and saved \$20 in grocery money for the special offering. They cut down on the lights to reduce electricity, did odd jobs such as house cleaning and babysitting, and sold handmade pot holders. They donated \$70 for the special offering for the poor family. That season of Lent, with the collection for the poor, was one of the best times in their lives. They enjoyed helping and talked about how the poor family could use the money. Easter Sunday arrived and they walked in the rain to church. One had cardboard in her shoes to fill the holes. They sat proudly in church and sang hymns as they walked home. For lunch they ate Easter eggs and fried potatoes. The minister drove up later that afternoon and gave them an envelope with some money in it. There was a total of \$87. They went from feeling like they were rich to feeling like they were poor. They had a happy life with a loving family. It was fun to share. They knew they didn’t have a lot, but they were always willing to share what they have, and never considered themselves to be the poor family. The next Sunday a missionary speaker needed money for a poor church in Africa that needed a roof. The poor family pulled out the envelope and the offering was counted. The missionary was excited and said "You must have some rich people in this church." The poor family gave more than all the others combined. They were the rich family in the church because they were rich in spirit. They embraced the love of Jesus. The poor family was spiritually rich because they cared.

Jesus cares for the people. Financially Jesus would be among the poorest in our society with no home, no possessions, and no wealth. His concern is not for the self. He has compassion for the people. We have a difficult time understanding the extent of God’s love. God loves us enough to sacrifice for us. Jesus knew he had to die. Jesus knew his friends had to suffer just so that people could understand the reality of resurrection. People had to see the life giving divine power of Jesus in action in order to believe in resurrection so that they could understand it when Jesus is resurrected from the dead. Jesus showed the religious leaders the big event so that they would believe. This is the sign that they demanded to see during the last festival. It was the divine status of Jesus that was questioned. It was the divine status of Jesus that was shown. However, instead of accepting the proof they were seeking, they still refused to believe.