

He Who Weeps Causes All Tears to Cease

Nov. 3, 2019

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Icebreaker

What do you like to listen to in the car?

Worship: John 3:16-18

(Read the poem or a Scripture passage to meditate on)

Practice lectio divina (sacred reading) by attentively reading John 3:16-18 aloud several times. Enter into a time of worship through prayer by using a word or a phrase from the passage.

Text for Discussion: John 11:5-7,17-44

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Deep down, each of us knows that the world is not as it should be. Whether we look to the conflict and poverty of the world at-large or the broken relationships and sickness in the lives of those we love, we know this is true. It's easy to turn a blind eye to all this – to avoid the pain and grief. It's just as easy to face it but find no reason for hope. How then are we called to react when confronted by the brokenness of the world?

As Christians, our hope is that we become people who live in a world where there are real tears and real pain, yet whose hope is anchored in the One who says He is going to make everything all right... and has the power to do so. Because when personally confronted with such pain, Jesus also said, "It's not supposed to be this way."

Jesus walks into the sorrow. And He does so with truth, love and wisdom. This is the model of how we should care for others when they feel consumed. With truth: God is completely sovereign over all our tears, all our pain, and all of our sorrow. If He was not, it would mean our grief was meaningless. Yes, we may not understand the "why" of our pain, but our Father assures us He is indeed in control. With love: It's not always enough to know that God is in control. But as John 11 shows, we are never alone in our pain. Because He loves us so very deeply, Jesus enters into our pain proving that God is both with us and for us. With wisdom: God knows our needs in the midst of our pain and demonstrates that He is indeed Emmanuel – God with us – by loving and caring for us exactly how we need it.

Jesus weeps with the sorrowful. And because He does, we know God is going to make everything all right. Jesus knows why Lazarus was allowed to die. He even knows He will raise him from the dead. So why is Jesus crying? Because He is angry and because He is afraid. Jesus is angry because of the brokenness of His creation. He sees how sin has wreaked havoc upon the world, and it makes Jesus mad. Jesus also cries because He is afraid. Why? Because He knows what it's going to take to heal creation. He knows that in order for Him to be the Resurrection and the Life, He's going to have to face His own death. And this terrifies Him. As Martin Luther said, "No man feared death as much as Jesus."

We have a God who is so committed to ending sorrow, sadness, sin and death that He decided to step in and face it Himself. This is our great hope and our great assurance. Yes, things aren't how they're supposed to be, but all things will be made right in Jesus and we will be fully healed. And so we learn to love and trust in the One who is with us and for us in the midst of our sorrow.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How does this passage teach us that God's sovereignty is never detached from His love?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- When the sisters sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was ill, what did they expect Jesus to do?
 - Why did Jesus choose not to go immediately to see Lazarus?
- Describe the differences and the sameness in Martha and Mary when they hear that Jesus has arrived?
 - How does Jesus respond with divine wisdom to each of them and meet their individual needs personally?
 - What do we learn about the way He deals with us from this passage?
- Discuss the doctrinal statements that both Jesus and Martha made in vs. 25-27.
 - What is significant about these statements?
- What do vv. 32-36 say about Jesus' humanity and His divine love?
 - Can you think of other passages that teach this as well?
- Did Jesus know from the beginning that he would raise Lazarus from the dead?
 - How does this passage teach us that God's sovereignty is never detached from His love?
 - Why do you think Jesus wept?
- When Lazarus was raised from the dead, how did the people respond? See John 11:45, 53, 57, & 12:10-11.
 - Do you think Jesus knew how they would respond? How does this point to the cross?
- We all experience pain and difficult times in our life. Did you question God's love during one of those times? Why or why not?
 - What or who helped you to know that God is with you and for you in the midst of your pain and struggle?
 - How have you faced the sorrow in your life with hope?
- What is something you most want to remember from this passage?
 - What life application do you want to make?

Prayer

Prayer is a vital part of community life that should not be skipped or zoomed through. This week use the A.C.T.S. model of prayer - Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Allow at least 5 minutes for each category as you pray together in smaller groups. Have the members pray their own prayer requests during the supplication time.

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Spiritual Formation Experience:

More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. The Daily Examen is to be done through prayer and often a journal. Try this version of St. Ignatius's prayer: 1) Quiet yourself before God's presence. 2) Review the last 24 hours with gratitude. 3) Reflect on your emotions and present them to God. 4) Pray about an aspect of the day with joy or ask for pardon and peace. 5) Ask God to guide you for tomorrow and look forward to the next 24 hours with trust and hope. This practice helps you to build the habit of reminding yourself of God's presence wherever you are, whatever you are doing.

Missional Experiment:

Do you know your neighbors? Do you know what they like? Do you know what they do? Could you invite them to your CG? How can we look beyond ourselves to reach out to the people around us? What can you do? As a group, continue to pray for one another and hold each other accountable to reach out to those without a relationship with Christ. Celebrate any answers to prayer.