

Jesus wept * John 11

March 21, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

Today, I want to talk with you about the shortest verse in the Bible, because the shortest verse in the Bible is actually one of the most powerful. Can you guess what it is?

It's John 11:35 – Jesus wept.

You probably know the story – Jesus had friends named Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Jesus found out that Lazarus was not well and by the time he arrived, Lazarus was gone. His sisters had buried him in a tomb and the whole community gathered around them to mourn.

When Jesus got there, He was confronted with the grim reality of death. A whole town grieving the loss of a neighbour and friend. The tear-streaked faces. The tired eyes. The sense of loss that comes when someone goes.

And in the face of this situation – Jesus wept.

Verse 33 says “He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.” And He wept.

That tells us something incredible about Jesus' character. He knows what it's like to suffer. He knows what it's like to mourn. He knows the pain of loss and the feeling of having your world turned upside down.

And that means that He knows exactly how it feels when we go through it.

Our God is not ignorant of human pain, unaware of the realities of real-life as a human being – He's been there – He knows what it's like. And it makes Him all the more able to help us in our time of need.

The Book of Hebrews actually makes a big deal of this –

Hebrews 4:15 says –

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.

Jesus knows what we are going through because He's been there too. He can sympathize with our weaknesses because He's experienced those weaknesses. Every road that we walk, He has walked before. And because of that, the verse continues -

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Heb 4:15-16 NIV).

Because He knows from personal experience how frail we are, Our God is all the more willing to help us in our time of need.

And this is very much a time of need, isn't it?

I know that we are all feeling a degree of loss, given the realities of COVID-19. Our 'normal' is not normal any more. Our worlds have literally been turned upside down.

And on top of that, many of us are walking through the valley of death. Some loved ones are already gone, others are in palliative care, there's a very real possibility that we or people we know could die of COVID-19.

But you know what? We are not alone in this. Jesus knows what we are going through. Imagine how He felt at Lazarus's grave. Imagine how He felt, hanging on the Cross to redeem us. That has more than prepared Him to help us in our time of need.

And not only does Jesus know what it's like, He is able to do something about it. In times of need, He comes alongside us to give us comfort and courage and mercy and grace. He carries us along when we can't take another step.

And He gives us real, unshakeable confidence that this grief is not the last word.

At Lazarus's grave, He said to Martha – "I am the resurrection and the Life and anyone who believes in me will never truly die." And then He brought Lazarus back to life again. He reversed death. And then He Himself died and rose again, so that if we believe in Him, so too shall we rise.

(14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. (1Th 4:14 NIV).

Jesus knows what it's like to mourn and so He gives us grace in time of need... And He has secured for us an eternal home where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

So, listen, I know that many of you are going through some difficult times and I want you to know that Jesus knows what it's like. He's been there too. He can identify with every thought and feeling and emotion that you are experiencing and His heart goes out to you with love. He weeps with you.

But not only does He weep with you, He fights for you. Jesus is actively working to build you up and renew you. And His resurrection from the dead means that *this* – whatever it is – is not the end of the story. We have an eternal life waiting for us and nothing can keep us from it.

So...

Since we have a great high priest who is able to sympathize with our every weakness, 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16 NIV).