

Luke 13:31-35

What makes you cry? A sad movie? A Tragedy? A death? Some people seem to cry at the drop of a hat. Others never show their emotions. But whether you cry a little or a lot, one thing is sure—the tears will flow when you die. Death really brings the tears. Not our own tears; not the tears of those who never knew us, or who didn't much care for us. But those who loved us will cry. They will cry many tears when you and I die.

What makes God cry? Does God cry? Yes. Jesus wept when His friend Lazarus died. He cried tears at the beginning of Holy Week when He approached the Holy City. And here in our text...it doesn't say that Jesus literally cried tears, but we can certainly draw that conclusion for His words are words of weeping: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

These words remind me of the death of Absalom—King David's son who had hated his father, and turned many in Jerusalem against him. A beautiful boy...an "Adonis" with long flowing hair. But fleeing on a mule, his hair became entangled in the branches of a tree, and hanging there by his hair, Joab thrust his spear into Absalom and killed him. Upon hearing the news of his son's death, David cried, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

As David wept over Absalom, so Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, for death really brings the tears. David wept because his son was dead. And Jesus weeps because God's people were dead in sin and unbelief. For centuries God had sent His prophets to call His people to repentance. But they had turned them away. Many they mistreated. Many they slew. They were not about to change their lives and repent of their sins. It mattered not what God's messengers had to say. Like Absalom, they hated their Father. They pretended to love Him, but in truth they rejected Him, and they caused many others to turn away from God as well.

And the day came when God sent His own Son to His people. But no matter what Jesus said or did, the people refused to repent. They rejected their Savior. They stubbornly refused to believe. And so, like David, Jesus stands weeping over His children, for they are just as stone cold dead as Absalom was.

Does God still weep today? Certainly He does. But it may surprise us to consider what it is that makes Him cry. Not the child-slayer. Not the mass-murderer. Not the terrorist. Not the pagan who bows down before his wooden idol. He stands today, so often, weeping over us. Our Lord cries tears over our lives for we too, like Jerusalem, so often refuse to repent. We, so often, reject His love and mercy.

Does God shed tears day after day every time we speak a hurtful word? Every time we disrespect His servants? Every time a word of gossip is spread? A lie is conceived? Jesus didn't cry over every single sin of the people of Jerusalem. He wept at what was at the root of their sins. He wept at what was at the core; at what was within the hearts of His beloved people. He wept at their unbelief; at their refusal of grace. He wept at their hardened hearts.

And that same hardened heart lives within us, and is at the root and core of our sins as well. When you and I speak words that hurt each other, we have turned our back on Jesus. When you and I lie to cover up our sins, we are rejecting Jesus' lordship in our life. When you and I disrespect God's servants in the home, the church, in government, we are refusing His claim on us. When you and I disregard and pass off as unimportant the hearing of His Word and the reception of His Sacrament, we are rejecting His grace and mercy. There is unbelief at work in each one of us, and our Lord surely weeps because of it.

Death really brings the tears. When you and I reject our Lord to live for ourselves, He weeps over the spiritual death within us. And yet, how true it is that when someone is dead, only the loved ones cry tears. Jesus weeps over you, friend, because He loves you. As David loved Absalom and wept at his death, so Jesus weeps for you. But Jesus can do something for you that David could never do for Absalom. "O Absalom," he cried, "would that I had died instead of you!" What David cried, Jesus did. David could only weep for his son. Jesus does more than weep for you—He dies in your place. "Would that I had died," cried David. But he could not. David could not take Absalom's place on that tree. But Jesus did. He took your place on the tree of the cross.

Jesus died instead of you. He suffered hell in your place. God punished Jesus as your Substitute. Your sins and mine entangled Jesus on Calvary's tree, and He hung there and He died. And just as Joab struck Absalom with his spear, so the soldier stuck his spear into Jesus' side...so that here in this little church in Augusta, Missouri on this very day you, God's people, receive His blood in the cup of His Sacrament. For here, this cup contains not Christ's tears over you, but His lifeblood for you, so that you may know that God loves you even to the point of dying for you.

When David wept for Absalom, Joab could not understand his grief..."Absalom was your enemy and yet you cry for him!" And such were you and I—God's enemies. Every day, even though we are God's baptized children, we so often act like we are God's enemies. But as Joab could not understand David's heart for his son, neither does the world understand God's merciful heart toward you. God dies for His enemies. He weeps out of love for you, and His heart of mercy moves Him to die for you.

Friend, God forgives you. The tears which ran down the cheeks of your Savior have washed over you in your baptism. For every tear that flows for you, there is forgiveness and pardon from God to you. God is not your enemy. No matter what Absalom did to hurt his father, David refused to hate him—he only loved him. And no matter what you have done to hurt God—no matter how disrespectful or neglectful you have been, God refuses to hate you. He only loves you. He only forgives you.

Absalom may be dead, but you friend...you live in Christ. For He who weeps over you gives Himself for you—so that you need not sorrow; so that you can rejoice that God loves you and forgives you; so that, in Christ, you can live not as God's enemy, but as who you really are—God's dear child for Jesus' sake. Amen.