

Luke 13:31-35

When was the last time you cried? Some of us would have to think long and hard about that. Others of us could answer quickly because tears flowed just the other day. There are people who can watch a sad movie and never shed a tear, and there are also those who will go through an entire box of tissues. For some reason most people do not like to see others cry. It bothers them. Maybe it concerns them. Perhaps they're not sure how to help and so they feel awkward and uncomfortable.

Our society has pretty much dictated when it's okay to cry and who can do it. It's okay for anyone to cry at a funeral. That's understandable. It's expected that babies will cry. But there comes a time when young children are told to "act your age and stop being a crybaby!" Men don't cry...at least they're not supposed to. That's why they avoid going to "tear-jerker" movies. They don't want anyone to see them walking out of the theater blowing their nose with their eyes all red from crying, even if there were only a few tears. I guess shedding tears is seen as a sign of weakness, and men are supposed to be strong.

Now Jesus was a man, and yet in our reading for today we see Him crying. Does that make Him weak? Of course not. What it does, however, is to challenge our views about the nature of shedding tears. For one thing I don't think we cry near enough. I'm not talking here about sad movies or other such things which can make us emotional. I'm referring to spiritual weeping; mourning over the fact that we are such disobedient people.

That's why Jesus was crying. Not for Himself--He was no sinner, but for the people of Jerusalem. He wept over them. He mourned that these people whom He loved displayed lives of unbelief. He did not say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I have confidence in you that you will do the right thing, that you will repent before it's too late." He said nothing of the kind. "Behold your house is forsaken," He cried. He did not ignore their unbelief and hope for the best. He wept. He mourned that these people wanted nothing to do with Him, with His teaching, with His mercy and compassion.

But we do the opposite, don't we? When we have loved ones who refuse the Word of God, we do not weep over their unbelief. We close our eyes to the truth and we justify their behavior saying, "Well, others are worse." We become like the spouse of the alcoholic who thinks she is showing love to her husband, but she is, simply put, an enabler and is actually helping him to remain an alcoholic. And that's what we do when we turn our eyes away from the unbelief in those whom we ought to be showing love to--showing love by weeping over them, by encouraging and even rebuking them when needed.

But perhaps we do not do this because the same unbelief lives in us. If we do not weep over our own sinfulness, how will we ever, like Jesus, weep with love over another? You and I do not shed enough tears over ourselves. We can live selfishly throughout the day, and when we lay our head down upon our pillow, shed not even one tear of repentance. We can leave our Bible closed for weeks at a time and it doesn't really bother us much at all. We can speak with disrespect to our parents and go off on our merry way without regret.

We are not weeping near enough over the unbelief in our own heart, and that friends, makes our Lord weep. Because if we can come up to His Holy Supper without giving thought to why we are even there, to the fact that we are poor sinners who have deserved eternal death for our sins, but that God in mercy forgives us...if we simply come up like cattle coming into the barn to eat hay because it's what

cattle do, but no tears of repentance are cried at least within our hearts, then we are no different from the people of Jerusalem, taking Jesus for granted, giving little or no thought to what He means to us.

Revelation 1 tells us that when Jesus returns on Judgment Day, many, many people will weep. And who will they be? Those who do not weep now over their sins. Those men who think it is weakness to cry tears of repentance, weakness to go to church, weakness to show love for the Word of God--and those women and children who follow them.

Now if all this brings any sorrow to your heart, tears of repentance, then this good news is for you. Remember your baptism. On that day you were washed in Jesus' tears. Jesus cried tears over Jerusalem for they refused to be gathered to Him as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you are baptized. Those tears which were sprinkled upon you have gathered you into Jesus' arms. As His wings were spread out and nailed to a cross, your sins were gathered to Him. As His tears fell from the cross for you, so now those tears are the waters of life for you.

Monica, for many years, shed tears over her son. He was a wicked boy. He was living an immoral life. He was selfish in every way, and he had no use for what God had to say about it. But Monica, his mother, kept weeping for him. She kept praying. She kept being a Christian example. She did what she could for him. And through Monica's tears, God brought life to her son who had been spiritually dead. God changed him. He led him to repent of his sinful life. He brought him to Christ. You may know his name...St. Augustine, the most respected Christian theologian of his day; the man whose writings became an inspiration to Martin Luther centuries later.

Jesus' tears, like Monica's were in a sense, are tears that give life. When you heard the Law accusing you earlier in the sermon, did you see your Lord weeping for you? His tears cause you to weep. His tears lead us to repentance. When you hear His good news for you, do you see your Lord weeping for you? Weeping tears of joy that you are His. Shedding tears because He is full of joy that for you He died, that with you He will be forever in heaven.

Jesus, you see, doesn't just gather you like a hen gathers her chicks. He forgives you. His tears cleanse you. He is not offended at our lack of tears. He is not angered by our weakness. As a mother hen cares for her chicks, so He cares for you. He loves you. He will not ever reject you even though we have often rejected Him. Friend, you are forgiven. God says so...that settles it. Amen.