

**SHED NO TEARS FOR JESUS!  
Third Sunday in Lent**

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Text: Luke 23:26-31

And as they led Jesus away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed Him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for Him. But turning to them Jesus said, "**Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?**"

Tragedy often brings tears to our eyes. Suffering does as well. Animal shelters quite often show pictures of animals that have been abused when they make their request for donations. The pictures of pathetic puppies and kittens stir our emotions. From time to time movies stir our emotions so that we must reach for a tissue to dry our eyes. It happens regularly when we see and understand tragic cases that move our hearts and bring tears to our eyes. The case before us during Lent is one of those cases. The death of Jesus is a tragedy. He suffered as an innocent victim ground into the dust by powerful religious leaders who were assisted by cowardly government officials. As Jesus left Jerusalem on the way to His crucifixion, a large number of people, including women, mourned and wailed for Him. His words to them directed those women to see the cross and its significance. Pointedly He told them not to weep for Him. We can heed His words too because they point us to His cross. **See His cross! Shed no tears for Jesus!**

**I. JESUS DOESN'T NEED ANYONE'S SYMPATHY.**

The gospel writers all paint a graphic picture. We see the brutal truth about the death of Jesus—a tragic event if there ever was one. Jesus had been arrested in the dead of the night and whisked away from the public eye until His public trial in the morning on Good Friday. During the night the Jewish leaders had not only questioned Jesus but convicted Him for claiming to be the Messiah. While it was the truth, they considered His bold assertion blasphemy and worthy of death.

Pilate offered no bright solutions as the tragic events unfolded. After an interview, which convinced Pilate that Jesus was innocent, he nevertheless scourged Jesus and humiliated Him before the angry crowd of Jews. The Roman soldiers did not hold back. Pilate issued the order for His crucifixion. The soldiers scourged Him, made Him a crown of thorns and then beat that crown into the brow of Jesus head with a reed. They made fun of this “king” who held a reed as a mock scepter and wore a faded soldier’s cloak as royal robe. What a tragic figure!

The soldiers then led Jesus out of Jerusalem to be crucified with two common criminals. The beating Jesus received had taken its toll on his body. He had not slept during the night instead He had been abused by the Jewish leaders. Then the brutal treatment of the scourging and the crown of thorns had weakened Him further. His blood was already on the floor where He was scourged, and He continued to bleed from those open wounds. Luke tells us that the soldiers forced Simon from Cyrene to carry the cross. They considered Jesus too weak to carry His own cross. The brutal

spectacle attracted a crowd. It's no wonder! People seem to always want to see such events, whether it's an ambulance pulling up to a neighbor's house or an accident on the freeway. People slow down to look.

What made this picture so tragic is that Jesus had done nothing wrong. Pilate knew it, and so did the Jewish leaders. Jesus had challenged them to prove that He had done something, anything, wrong. He was innocent and pure. Not only was He innocent but He had demonstrated nothing but kindness and compassion during His ministry. How many times in the Scriptures do we read that Jesus had compassion on those who came seeking His help? His message was not one of sedition or rebellion. He spoke of God's love and the blessings of that love for sinners. He promised eternal life to believers. His gentle touch had healed many. Only a few days earlier He had been welcomed into Jerusalem by a large crowd shouting, "***Hosanna to the Son of David!***" Those cries had been replaced with "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Now all those shouts of joy and the later cries of anger had turned to mourning and wailing. The scene brought tears to the eyes of the women.

This is without doubt a human tragedy of colossal magnitude. It is the story of betrayal, suffering, and injustice. The news networks in our day would make this their lead story. They know how such a story would tug at heart strings and stir emotions. Yet Jesus spoke to these women, saying, "***Do not weep for me***" (Luke 23:28).

Why not weep for Jesus? This is a human tragedy. Jesus is human like those women and like all of us. He endured pain. He bled like everyone else. He was abandoned not only by His closest friends but also by His own countrymen. They screamed, "Crucify Him!" He appeared to be a helpless human in the grip of powerful forces. Yes, He is like us.

That is why we should *not* weep at this tragic event. Jesus is like us in every way. He is our substitute. He has flesh and blood just like we do. Our bodies too would bleed at a brutal beating that soldiers gave Jesus. His body was no different. Jesus is fully human and is our substitute. As we hear Jesus tell the women not to weep, we are encouraged to wipe our eyes of tears as well. Shed no tears for Jesus. Instead, see His cross as the payment for your sins. He became human so that He could assume your place and be your substitute. Jesus became —your sin and my sin—so we might be declared free of sin and acquitted before God's justice. Let me repeat that: *Jesus became —your sin and my sin—so we might be declared free of sin and acquitted before God's justice.* That's what St. Paul tells us as well in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "***God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God***".

Jesus left Jerusalem surrounded by Roman soldiers. Simon carried the instrument of our Savior's torture and death. Tragic! Yet you shed no tears for Jesus. But you cannot be unmoved by what you see. Jesus suffered for you. He was your human substitute and mine. He was beaten, scourged, humiliated, and ridiculed for you. It was your punishment that He endured. Your hearts should be moved with reverence for a Savior who loves you that much. You should be moved to gratitude that He took your place and suffered what you deserved. In His cross and all the suffering of His passion, we can grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for unworthy sinners like us.

## **II. SHED TEARS FOR YOUR OWN TRAGEDY.**

The tears of the women were understandable. They saw the tragedy, but not the significance behind this human tragedy. Jesus encouraged them to dry their tears. He wanted to shift their attention away from the tragedy of His death to help them understand what He was doing, for He was doing it for them. Jesus asked them to redirect their vision, to see His cross. He did that by asking them to think of their own human tragedies and the tragedies of their children.

Perhaps some of them had personal stories of human suffering. We do not know. The reality is that without the cross of Jesus, every human life is tragic. Life is a struggle. It was for these women. And it would remain a struggle even after Jesus' death and resurrection. It has always been that way for humans. Some experience more hardship and difficulty than others, but life always comes with some tears and anguish. As these women journeyed through life, they would age, they would grow weary, perhaps they would be unable to move around without assistance. At the end of their journeys, they would be carried out of their homes and buried like all others before them. That should sound familiar to you. We may have electricity and cars, but we also have hardship, difficulty, and death intrude into our lives as well.

Jesus reminded these women, **“Do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children”** (Luke 23:28). Their children would experience the same as every other human throughout history. They might make sacrifices for their children so that the next generation might have a better life. But their children would end up in the grave. Even if their children accomplished great things, those accomplishments would fade into the dust and become only debris and broken monuments for archaeologists.

Sadly, Jesus also saw destruction waiting for Jerusalem because of the rejection of Him and His message. Once as He and His disciples left Jerusalem, the disciples looked back at the city and marveled at the beauty of the temple. Jesus told them, **“As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down”** (Luke 21:6). Jesus had said that even the joy of having children would evaporate in the judgment of God on their unbelief. He said that in God's judgment, women would consider those who had no children blessed. The reason for tears is not the tragic story of Jesus but the tragic story of every human who stands outside God's grace—every human heart that does not see the cross of Christ and embrace it in faith.

Perhaps we need to shed some tears for our own situation. We know that the wages of sin is death. We are not exceptions to that rule. We are sinners. The human tragedy is that we cannot change that rule no matter what good we might do or what monuments we might erect with our lives of service. Our children inherit the same dysfunction and sin from us. Although most of us live each day denying that life will end, human life and its end call for a sober reflection—even tears. We are the helpless victims trapped in the prison of sin and death in our mortal flesh.

But our human tragedy is not without hope. That hope is in the cross of Jesus. He took our place—a real, human substitute—satisfied God's justice. You are forgiven—declared righteous. The journey of your life, no matter how many dark valleys you may experience, is not a dead end at the judgment of God. See the cross for what it is— it is payment in full for all your sins. Just as the wages of sin is death, so the free gift of God is eternal life. So shed no tears for Jesus. Soberly consider your own failings and cling to the cross of Jesus. For He (✝) is your Redeemer, and in Him all your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in Jesus name, amen and amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
**AMEN!**