

Trivia question - what's the trivia question that goes with our lesson? "What's the shortest verse in the Bible." The answer? John 11:35 - "**Jesus wept.**" There's really nothing trivial about that, is there? That shortest verse is packed with meaning. "**Jesus wept.**" The Lord of the Angel Armies who strikes down his enemies left and right - he wept. The Lord of Life who welcomes his people home to heaven - he wept. The all-powerful Son of God who holds everything together - he wept; he shed tears.

It shouldn't surprise us; God isn't some cold and unfeeling god of facts and stats; a cold and distant god ruling and judging from a distance; a cold and impersonal god impersonally powering the laws of nature. Oh, when God sees the evil of this world, he hurts. When God sees his people too busy for him, ignoring him for the life of the world, he hurts. When Jesus sees his people clueless, like sheep without a shepherd, Jesus hurts in his gut for them. When Jesus sees and hears a man with leprosy beg: "**Lord, have mercy,**" Jesus doesn't just pass on by; he doesn't just snap a finger over him; Jesus' heart reaches out and touches the untouchable, and heals him. Yes, Jesus is our Rock, our unbreakable Rock, but he is not an unfeeling rock. So, Jesus wept.

Why? Sounds like a silly question, doesn't it? His friend Lazarus just died. That would explain why Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha and friends and neighbors were crying, but not why Jesus wept. Jesus knew he was about to raise Lazarus back to life. Jesus wasn't mourning, grieving, weeping over a dead friend. Jesus knew Lazarus would soon be alive. Jesus was weeping with his friends Mary and Martha; Jesus was hurting because his friends were hurting; Jesus was sad because his friends were sad; Jesus wept with his friends. Isn't that great to know?

Death is hard, facing death is hard; living with the death of someone you know and love is hard. Made all the more difficult because when it's your turn to be mourning and grieving, there's someone out there - or some voice in here - cold and distant, cold and impersonal - some facts and stats somebody out there, some facts and stats voice in here - "Everyone dies; deal with it." When you feel like you're getting the cold and impersonal facts and stats treatment, remember "**Jesus wept.**" When you feel like you should be giving the cold and impersonal facts and stats treatment, when you feel like you should be giving yourself the cold and impersonal facts and stats treatment, remember "**Jesus wept.**" Jesus shed tears with this friends in their tears. Jesus hurt with his friends in their hurt.

And death hurts. I know we sing Jesus' words - "Do not let your hearts be troubled." And in a few minutes, we'll sing: "Jesus Lives the Victory's Won, death no longer can appall me." True! Thank you, Lord! But death and dying still hurt. And, in a sense, they are supposed to hurt. Death and dying are part of this world because of sin brings God's judgment. Death - forever death, weeping and gnashing teeth in the forever fires of hell death - is God's judgment on sin and the sinner. And dying ... Dad would say that living in a cancered, dying body, as family and friends around us die and are gone ... Dad would say God is prying loose our fingers, prying loose our hold on this world; God is prying loose our death-grip on this dying and damned world. God's judgment is hard; dying and death are hard.

That's why Jesus wept - not in our lesson - but later over Jerusalem. On Palm Sunday, riding into Jerusalem, Jesus wept because he knew what would happen to Jerusalem, how Jerusalem would be judged, destroyed for holding on to the life of this world instead of holding on to him. Jesus saw God's judgment coming on God's people, and it hurt. It hurt all the more because Jesus knew where he was going. Jesus was on the way to the cross - taking our place, carrying our sin, judged and condemned for our guilt. Jesus was on the way to die our death. Later that week, Holy Thursday night in the Garden of Gethsemene, it brought him to tears, his tears falling from his face like blood. Jesus knew how hard death and dying is; Jesus knew God's judgment - and it brought him to tears.

The tears Jesus sheds with Mary and Martha are different from his tears in the Garden of Gethsemene, different from his tears on the way to Jerusalem. The tears in our lesson aren't tears squeezed out by the anguish of God's judgment; they're not tears shed over the lost. The tears Jesus shed with Mary and Martha are tears of empathy and compassion. Why? Jesus knows - even with heaven ahead of us - death and dying are hard.

Because death and dying are hard, what can we expect in the face of death and dying? Not just tears but hard feelings, raw emotions, guilt, anger, and - with Jesus - beautiful trust. We see all of that in our lesson.

As Jesus approaches Bethany, Martha goes out to him: "**Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**" Was Martha taking a shot at Jesus? It might sound that way, but chances are Martha knew her brother was dead even before Jesus found out he was sick. So, perhaps instead of anger or bitterness directed at Jesus, perhaps Martha is kicking herself - "If I just would have reached out to Jesus earlier. If I just would have ...." Dying and death get us kicking

ourselves, doesn't they? - "If I just would have ...." With Jesus, we don't need to kick ourselves. In the face of death Jesus says: "**Do not let your heart be troubled.**" Jesus has peace and life for us!

Later some of Mary and Martha's grieving guests did take a shot at Jesus. When they saw Jesus weeping, "**Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?**" In other words, "Oh, if he cares so much, why didn't he do something about it?" That shot comes easily, doesn't it? "Why, God? Why didn't you do something, God? Why, God, if you're so powerful, if you're so loving, why, God, didn't you help?" When we're stuck in our hurt, when we're stuck with our hearts and our minds stuck on this life, when we're stuck on the here and now, it's so easy to fall into that trap, easy to take that shot. But Jesus has something better for us than this life; Jesus has something better for us than here and now; we don't need to think this life is all that matters.

Jesus has the promise and the power to deliver a life better than this life. When Martha tells Jesus that Lazarus had died, what does Jesus tell her? Not - "he lived such a good life." Not - "he lived such a full life." But - "**Your brother will rise again.**" Why? Not - because he was so good. Not - because everyone rises and goes to heaven. No, Jesus wasn't one to spout feel-good lies. Instead of spouting feel-good lies, Jesus tells the truth about life and death. "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.**" The answer to death and dying isn't found in ourselves; the answer to death and dying isn't found in medical care or self care; the resurrection and the life isn't in some yet to be found discovery. Jesus is the resurrection and the life; Jesus is the answer to death and dying. Whoever believes in him has the answer to death and dying. Whoever believes in him has his resurrection and life.

Unless God brings this world to it's Judgment Day end first, my body will do the Raddatz thing and die. But I am not just my body; you are not just your bodies. God has created us to be people with both body and soul. The death of our bodies is not the end of our souls. But when our bodies die, for us who live and believe in Jesus, Jesus will take our souls; he will take us to be with him in heaven. And then, on the Last Day, on Judgment Day, Jesus will raise our bodies to be with him. Then, body and soul together, we will live with God; we'll enjoy life the way it's supposed to be with God in heaven forever.

That sounds like a lot, doesn't it? I was visiting one of our homebound sisters this past week. I shared this lesson with her. She shared back: "That sounds like a lot." Doesn't it? Wouldn't it be great to have some sort of proof to back up those words? How about these words: "**Lazarus, come out!**" And Lazarus, four-day-dead Lazarus, came out of the tomb alive. Some day Jesus will call us, and we will rise - alive. Amen.

**THE SERVICE**

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** through self-care and medical treatment, through suicide and euthanasia, through denial and \_\_\_\_\_ we seek power over dying and death.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we meet the One who has real power over death - in Jesus we have life!

**OPENING HYMN**

*“Joyously I’ll Praise My Savior”*  
**Hymn 611**

Joyously I’ll praise my Savior;  
for my God I’ll gladly sing,  
as I see his loving favor  
evident in ev’rything.  
In his faithful heart is beating  
love that’s pure and wide and long,  
love that makes his servants strong.  
All I see on earth is fleeting;  
God’s amazing love for me  
lasts for all eternity.

God, with firm and clear conviction,  
gave for me his precious Son,  
by whose bloody crucifixion  
I from hell have now been won.  
O you spring of love prevailing,  
depth of which I’ll never know,  
current which will ever flow.  
All I see on earth is failing;  
God’s amazing love for me  
lasts for all eternity.

God had seen my sad condition,  
gave me sight when I was blind;

he will be my great physician,  
healing body, soul, and mind.  
When it seems it's not worth trying—  
all my skill gets nothing done—  
Jesus helps me carry on.  
All I see on earth is dying;  
God's amazing love for me  
lasts for all eternity.

Since your love is never-ending,  
far beyond what words can say,  
up to you my hands extending,  
Father, as your child, I pray:  
Let your grace to me be given  
that I may with all my might  
cling to you both day and night  
till I see your face in heaven  
where my praise and love will be  
yours for all eternity.

#### OPENING SENTENCES

Our help is in the name of the Lord.  
**Who made heaven and earth.**

#### CONFESSION

Brothers and sisters in Christ, during the days of Lent, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God.

The time of Lent reminds us that to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, we must also know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor. In our struggle and in our times of trouble, we know that with Jesus we have God's promise and power.

I invite you, now, to confess your sins, ask our Father for forgiveness, and commit yourselves to this struggle.

**HYMN**

*"Lord, Have Mercy"*

**Hymn 652 vs. 1**

For what we have done and left undone  
we fall on your countless mercies.

For sins that are known and those unknown  
we call on your name so holy.

For envy and pride, for closing our eyes;  
for scorning our very neighbor.

In thought, word, and deed we've failed you, our King;  
how deeply we need a Savior. (Refrain I)

Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy on us.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy on us.

**ABSOLUTION**

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live.

Therefore, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

During these days of Lent, let us implore God to give us renewal and his Holy Spirit. May we continue to abide in the true faith and at the last be received by him through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**HYMN**

*"Lord, Have Mercy"*

**Hymn 652 vs. 2**

For what you have done, your life of love  
you perfectly lived, we praise you.

Though tempted and tried, you fixed your eyes;  
you finished the work God gave you.

And there on the tree, a King among thieves,  
you bled for a world's betrayal.  
You loved to the end, our merciful friend;  
how pure and forever faithful. (Refrain II)

Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy on us.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy on us.  
(Repeat)

#### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Eternal God and Father, help us to remember Jesus, who obeyed your will and bore the cross for our salvation, that through his anguish, pain, and death we may receive the forgiveness of sins, victory over the grave, and finally inherit eternal life; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### **FIRST READING**

*John 11:1-16*

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

**PSALM OF THE DAY**

*Psalm 16A*

*Refrain*

My heart, therefore, is glad, and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest, will rest secure.

LORD, you alone are my portion / and my cup;  
you make my / lot secure.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant / places;  
surely I have a delightful in- / heritance.

I keep my eyes always / on the LORD.

With him at my right hand, I will not be / shaken. *Refrain*

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue re- / joices;  
my body also will / rest secure,

because you will not abandon me to the realm / of the dead,  
nor will you let your Holy One / see decay.

You make known to me the / path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at / your right hand.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son**

**and to the Holy / Spirit,**

**as it was in the be- / ginning,**

**is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain***

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*John 11:25*

I am the resurrection and the life.

Those who believe in me will live, even though they die.

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

## APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

## HYMN

*"I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name"*

Hymn 846

I know of a sleep in Jesus' name,  
a rest from all toil and sorrow;  
earth folds in her arms my weary frame  
and shelters it till the morrow.  
My soul is at home with God in heav'n;  
my sorrows are past and over.

I know of a morning, bright and fair  
when tidings of joy shall wake us,  
when songs from on high shall fill the air  
and God to his glory take us,  
when Jesus shall bid us rise from sleep;  
how joyous that hour of waking!

God's Son to our graves then makes his way;  
his voice hear all tribes and nations.  
The trumpet of God will sound the day  
and shake all the earth's foundations.  
He calls out aloud, "O dead, come forth!"  
In glory we rise to meet him.

O Jesus, draw near my dying bed  
and take me into your keeping  
and say when my spirit hence is fled,  
"This child is not dead, but sleeping."  
And leave me not, Savior, till I rise  
to praise you in life eternal.

SERMON

*John 11*

HYMN

*"Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won"*  
Hymn 444

Jesus lives! The vict'ry's won!  
Death no longer can appall me.  
Jesus lives! Death's reign is done!  
From the grave Christ will recall me.  
Brighter scenes will then commence;  
this shall be my confidence.

Jesus lives! To him the throne  
high o'er heav'n and earth is given.  
I shall go where he is gone,  
live and reign with him in heaven.  
God is faithful; doubtings, hence!  
This shall be my confidence.

Jesus lives! For me he died;  
hence will I, to Jesus living,  
pure in heart and act abide,  
praise to him and glory giving.

All I need God will dispense;  
this shall be my confidence.  
Jesus lives! I know full well  
nothing me from him shall sever.  
Life nor death nor pow'rs of hell  
part me now from Christ forever.  
God will be a sure defense;  
this shall be my confidence.

Jesus lives! And now is death  
but the gate to life immortal;  
this shall calm my trembling breath  
when I pass its gloomy portal.  
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense:  
Jesus is my confidence!

#### OFFERING

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#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Heavenly Father, you loved the world and gave your Son to free us from sin  
and death by his obedient death on the cross.

**We confess that without your love we are lost.**

Lord of the Church, we thank you for the treasure of the gospel. By your  
Spirit, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

**Strengthen our determination to do what pleases you, no matter what the  
danger or the cost.**

Guard and guide those who carry a cross in the name of Christ and face  
ridicule and persecution for the sake of the kingdom: missionaries and  
chaplains, young people who stand up for what is right in the face of  
pressure to do what is wrong, and all who pay a high price for their faith  
and values as Christians.

**By your Spirit, O Lord, grant them patience and endurance.**

Keep in your care those who carry heavy burdens in life: the sick and the chronically ill, the depressed and the lonely, those torn by conflict in personal relationships, and those victimized by war and injustice. [We pray especially for...*here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Comfort all who face the terrors of life with a heavy heart.

**Grant them peace, O Lord, and in your mercy, be their guardian and friend, their comfort and hope.**

Watch over those who care for others: pastors and counselors; physicians and nurses; social workers and caring friends; all who feed the hungry, comfort the hurting, and stand beside the dying.

**Strengthen them in their work, O Lord, and do not let them become weary in doing good.**

Hear us as we pray in silence.

Help us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Keep us faithful even to the point of death, that we may receive the crown of life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

#### BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

#### CLOSING HYMN

*"Jerusalem the Golden"*

**Hymn 890**

Jerusalem the golden,  
with milk and honey blest—  
the sight of it refreshes  
the weary and oppressed.

I know not, oh, I know not  
what joys await us there,  
what radiancy of glory,  
what bliss beyond compare.

They stand, those halls of Zion,  
all jubilant with song  
and bright with many an angel  
and all the martyr throng.  
The Prince is ever in them,  
the daylight is serene;  
the pastures of the blessed  
are ever rich and green.

There is the throne of David,  
and there, from care released,  
the shout of them that triumph,  
the song of them that feast.  
And they who with their leader  
have conquered in the fight  
forever and forever  
are clad in robes of white.

O sweet and blessed country,  
the home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country  
that eager hearts expect!  
In mercy, Jesus, bring us  
to that dear land of rest;  
you are with God the Father  
and Spirit ever blest.