

Jesus Wept

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Date: 22 June 2014

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] 38. Now as we know the miracles of Jesus, there are many, there are varied, but they all point to who he is.

And certainly that's one of the great things in this particular epistle, sorry, this particular gospel, is that John is always highlighting the miracles of Jesus as signs.

He said this is a sign, these were signs manifesting, declaring who he is, the Son of God. Now I suppose in many ways that this miracle has caught our attention probably more than any because, partly because of the detail in it, but also because it is so miraculous.

Now of course we know this is not the first time or the only time that Jesus took people up from the dead. We know, I think we mentioned that before, you have for example Jairus' daughter who had just died and her body was still on the bed.

Then we have Jesus raising the widow's son and that was during the funeral procession. The body was in the coffin being carried to the grave. And now here we have the raising of Lazarus where the body has already been days in the grave.

[1 : 26] So we see that even at different stages that Jesus is operating in full authority and in full control. Now last week we saw the sister, a couple of weeks ago, saw the sister sending for Jesus.

Jesus. And we saw how important that was and that their prayer was based upon Jesus' love or Lazarus.

That's what they said. He whom you love is sick. And we also saw the wisdom of the sisters in leaving, as it were, open to Jesus to work in whichever way he wanted.

They didn't dictate to him. Now I know that often we need to be specific in prayer because sometimes we don't get because we don't ask. And sometimes prayers can be so vague if the Lord answers, we're not able to recognize that he has answered.

So there is a real need for specific prayer. And I'm sure we're all aware of times when we have prayed specifically for something and the Lord has answered.

[2 : 35] Sometimes he'll say no, sometimes he'll say wait, and sometimes he answers. But it's also, we saw how important it is not to dictate to the Lord because often his ways are different and he will often work in a different way to what we would expect or sometimes even want.

The one thing that the sisters didn't expect was that Jesus wouldn't come because it's very obvious from the fact that they said, Lord, if you had been here, our brother would not have died.

So I think that the sisters, when they sent for Jesus, were fully expecting Jesus to come, but he didn't. And so when Jesus arrives in Bethany, he's faced with all the sorrow and all the pain, all the tears, all the grief that accompanies death.

Now some people try and avoid grieving. They sometimes somehow think that they've got to remain such that they've got to try and fight against grieving.

But I don't think that's right because either it'll turn us into people who are hard and almost inhumane or else it will, at a later stage, it will erupt and maybe even in a more distressing way.

[3 : 56] Because grief is a way where we're able to express, to give rein to the awful pain and anguish and hurt that's going on within us.

And as we'll see in a moment, we even see Jesus giving way to grief. So grieving, of course, is, it's all part of the result of sin, because if there wasn't sin, we wouldn't be grieving.

There would be no purpose. There would be nothing to cause grief. But because we live in a fallen world, grief is part and partial of our life here.

And that's what makes heaven such a wonderful prospect, because it says that God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. It's a wonderful, wonderful prospect.

That means everything that causes tears will be gone forever. So I think it's also important to realize from here that we ought not to try and go through grief just on our own.

[5 : 05] That it's very important to share, and I believe particularly to share with Jesus. When John the Baptist was beheaded, it tells us that John's disciples did two things.

That they, first of all, they went and they got, they took away the body of John. And they would have taken the body to bury. But they then went and told Jesus. And I think there we have that great example, and that's what we ought always to do.

In our distress, in our sorrows, in our pains, in our tragedies, and all these things, to tell Jesus. Now, again we find here that Jesus' delay in coming, it's explained to us as we go through this chapter. If we're going right through the chapter, we're not going right through it today. But there are three things that are highlighted. And Jesus highlights that the death, his delay, and the death of Lazarus, and all that's going to surround that, and what is going to come from it, three things are going to happen.

Existing faith, that's like the likes of Mary and Martha's faith, is going to be strengthened. Other people are going to come to faith. We see that towards the end of the chapter.

[6 : 24] That many believed in him. And also, it is for the glory of God. Jesus tells us, all these things, this chapter highlights all these things.

And the glory of God, of course, is always what must be uppermost in our thinking. It often isn't. And sometimes we will add into our prayers, Lord, for your glory's sake. Sometimes we don't realize what we're saying.

Of course, that's what we ought to be doing. Because the way God takes glory to his name can be very different to the way we think he'll take glory to his name. Because he was going to take glory to his name through the death of Lazarus.

So we've got to remember that, that sometimes the way God will work and take glory to his name will surprise us. Now, of course, the glory of God is that which reveals himself to be a glorious being.

And it's through our knowledge of his glory that we come to our knowledge of himself. What do we mean? Well, for instance, it is through our knowledge of his glory that we first of all come to our knowledge of himself by looking at this creation.

[7 : 38] By looking at the skies, by looking at the sun, the moon, the stars, by looking at the whole creation. The heavens declare the glory of God.

The sky, says Hanwhatsby. There's a message being declared loud and clear to all humanity as we look at the creation of this world.

So that's why atheists and agnostics have to do an awful lot of work in suppressing the truth. It's not natural. For a person to be an atheist or an agnostic is not natural.

Because the heavens actually declare the glory of God. So in order to be an atheist, people have to suppress, they have to work at it. And it's very easy to do it for a lot of people because it's just this enmity against God.

But they still, they're not realizing it, but that's what they're having to do. They're having to suppress the truth that's facing them. Because we're told that the creation reveals to us the eternity, the power of God.

[8 : 45] And so the glory of God is seen, as we say, in the natural world, but it's also seen more particularly in his word. And where this is revealed to us, it's a word that makes us wise to salvation.

It's a word that's sharp. It's a word that directs. It's a word that builds up. A word that forgives and rebukes and all these different things. And of course, the glory of God is seen in Jesus Christ.

Jesus kept telling people, He who has seen me has seen the Father. The glory of God is shown to us in Jesus Christ.

Christ, we're told, is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his passion. And of course, it's a great desire that even Jesus himself had as mediator in this world was the glory of the Father. Everything he did was to the glory of the Father. In fact, Paul tells us that everything, every single thing is ultimately working to the glory of God.

[9 : 55] And he gives us that great passage in Philippians where he says, About every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Everything is ending in this. When Jesus himself will, you see, the Father has given the Son a people to save. And Jesus, at the end, is going to give the people back, as it were, to the Father.

And so, everything ends in the glory of God. Now, we see here that both the sisters believe that if Jesus had been present, that their brother wouldn't have died.

And so, we find that Jesus comes to deal with, first of all, with Martha. And he makes the most amazing statement as he speaks to Martha.

Because in verse 25, one of the great statements, one of the great statements anywhere in the Bible, where Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life.

[11:00] And with C.S. Lewis, I think it was C.S. Lewis that was saying, that really there are only three alternatives with regard to this.

That either the person who would make a statement like that is either mad or bad, or it is who he says he is. A person who is mad or a person who is trying to deceive everybody, where we can rule the first and the second out.

And Jesus is exactly who he is. And who he says he is. To make a statement like that, in the face of death, coming to a tomb, to a grave, saying, look, I am the resurrection and the life.

It is really an extraordinary statement. And if we stop and think about it, nowhere else, anywhere in the world, can you get anybody who will stand in the face of death and say, look, I have conquered death.

I will defeat death. I am the resurrection. Nobody else can say that in all the world. They can say it, but they cannot prove it.

[12:07] They cannot do it. Jesus did. That is what makes a Christian faith so completely different to all the other isms and faiths in this world. Because all the others, Muhammad is in a grave somewhere.

Joseph Smith is in a grave somewhere. All the leaders of all the different religions in this world, they are in a grave somewhere. The one that we follow, his tomb is empty, his grave is empty, he is not here.

Come, see the place where the Lord lay. He is not here, he is risen. And that distinguishes and separates the Christian faith from every other faith or ism in the whole wide world.

So this is a defining statement that Jesus is making here. And of course we know that what Jesus is saying is what happens to me as your representative will happen to you as well.

And so Jesus says, whoever believes in me shall never die. Amazing statement, never die. Yes, we'll go through the process of death at a physical level.

[13:15] But that's it. And death, as the Bible shows us, I think did we mention that? It's like sleeping. It's like the grave, it's like a bed. It's a place of rest, it's a place of renewal, it's only, it's temporary.

We can never talk about the permanence of the grave. Because it's only for a time. There is going to come a resurrection morning. You'll often see that in a gravestone.

Until the day breaks. And that day, of course, we're talking about, is eventually, is ultimately the resurrection morning. Because every grave is going to open.

And the bodies are going to rise. It's going to be an amazing morning, that. And the word of God tells us that, as the dazzling brilliance of Jesus, as he descends, again, from heaven.

And that day will be so different. Many people never, didn't believe in him, first time he came. There won't be one person, who will have the slightest doubt, that the descending Jesus Christ, is who he is, in all his glory.

[14:25] There will be no skeptics, or doubters, or agnostics, or atheists, on that particular day.

And we're told in scripture, that on that day, the Lord will shout, the voice, there will be the voice, of the archangel, and the sound, of the trumpet of God.

And first Corinthians, tells us this, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, and the dead, will be raised, imperishable, and we, shall be changed.

Isn't that an amazing thought? Imperishable. What a change. Here in this world, we're changing all the time. And there's illness, and we're getting old, and all the accompanying ailments, and things with it.

That's going to stop. When a body rises, it's going to be a new order. And of course, it's all a great mystery. Paul, again, writing in Corinthians, he looked on it, as the example he was giving, of the body being put into the grave, and then rising again, like how you put a seed into the ground, and a plant grows up from that seed.

And he said, the seed and the plant, if you put the seed there, and then afterwards the plant, they would look completely different. But you couldn't have the one without the other.

[15 : 50] And the one came from the other. And that's exactly how it's going to be, with you and with me as well. Because the seed, that's our body.

The seed is being put into the ground. And our body is going to be put into the tomb, into the grave. But it's going to arise, a glorious body.

It's little wonder the Christian is able to look at death, and say, O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? And then Jesus asked Martha, do you believe this?

And Jesus is asking us this question as well. Do you believe it? Do I believe it? Do I believe this? Because if we really believe this, it has a profound impact upon our life.

It changes our whole attitude to life. It changes our whole attitude to everything, where we have this absolute belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[16 : 51] In fact, as we come to church today, that's one of the things that we're doing. We're meant, this is a day that Jesus rose from the dead. Every Lord's Day is reminding us of this. And then we find something which is, I think, just one of the most wonderful parts of Scripture here as well, is where we find Jesus identifying himself so powerfully, and so strongly, with this broken-hearted family.

Because we find that Jesus weeps. Now, this is what I find amazing, is that here is Jesus who is in control, right?

He knows what he's going to do. And again, if you were to put it from a human point of view, it would be very easy, right? Put yourselves in this picture.

And all around you have this scene of grief. Broken, Mary's broken-hearted, Martha's broken-hearted, there are loads of, there'll be relatives that were professional mourners as well, that was part of the culture, but there's a lot of family, there'll be a lot of relatives.

And so there's this grief, and it's tangible, it's a grief you can enter into. Now, it would be very easy for Jesus, no, it wouldn't, but putting it at just a human level, taking Jesus as it were, and you, supposing you or I had this power and authority to raise the dead, very easy to think of yourself standing there, kind of aloof, kind of saying, ah, just you wait till you see.

[18 : 22] What I'm going to do. And having this sense of otherness, and sense of being a part, and then going to come in and do this wonderful thing. No. Jesus doesn't do that.

Not at any moment. There's not even a hint of it. We find that Jesus is so caught up with Mary and Martha, and he so loves Mary and Martha, that we find him weeping with them.

And the actual word, Greek, it's a very, very rich language, it's an aorist, and that means that the tense here is one of definite action.

So when it says, Jesus wept, what it actually is saying is, Jesus burst into tears. It wasn't that a tear trickled down his cheek, so to speak, but that it was just a, like a bursting into tears, real crying, sobbing.

It's actually an amazing moment. And people will say sometimes, how come that the Son of God is weeping?

[19 : 35] Just because of that reason. He is perfect love. And perfect love identifies completely with those that he loves.

And so he has completely entered into their pain and their sorrow. And that is, that's how the Christian should be. It's not something that we try to do.

It's not something a Christian should say, oh well I must try and feel the pain. We do. We feel people's, cannot enter completely into it because only those who are going through it or those who are going through a similar thing can completely understand.

But we, there is that fellow feeling. There is this sympathy of heart. Their pain comes into our heart. That's, that's how it is.

And so we find Jesus weeping. And he hasn't changed. He's still the Savior who's been touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

[20 : 40] He knows. He understands. But all power and authority is given to him. But there's another aspect to this as well that sometimes with the response of Jesus that isn't properly translated.

And isn't really properly translated anywhere. And that's in verses 33 and 38. When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and

greatly troubled.

And then in verse 38 again it says, Jesus deeply moved again, came to the tomb. Now, this reaction of Jesus is really quite an amazing thing.

And I don't know whether the translators have shied away from it. because the actual word that is used here, if you take it away out of a human context, was used for like the snorting of horses when they would be angry.

But when it is used as a human, it is always used to describe anger. So what we have here is when it talks about Jesus being deeply moved, that he is, there is real anger along with the tears of sympathy, there is real anger in his heart.

[22 : 10] And some people have very interesting descriptions of this. Carson says he was outraged in spirit.

And B.B. Warfield, the great theologian, what he said here is what John tells us is that Jesus approached the grave of Lazarus in a state not of uncontrolled grief, but of inexpressible anger. So that, I find this really, really interesting. And people have to say, well, what caused this reaction from Jesus? What was it?

And some people will say, oh, it was the unbelief of the people round about. No, it was none of these things. It was death. Pure and simple. It was death.

And the effect of death and the impact of death. Here's a family Jesus loves. A family that Jesus was so caught up in and with.

[23 : 15] And he's seeing the impact of death. He is experiencing what death really is. It's unnatural. It's not the way that man was made in the first instance.

And he's seeing the forces of darkness and the power that is behind death. Seeing all these things. And so there's this anger, a righteous anger in him at death.

It's an amazing thing. Again, to quote B.B. Warfield, he says, the spectacle of the distress of Mary and her companions enraged Jesus because it brought powerfully home to his consciousness the evil of death and the unnaturalness and as Calvin would say, the violent tyranny of death.

It's quite a description, that. That's how Calvin described death. A violent tyranny. A tyrant. A violent tyrant. And that's all caught up in this moment as Jesus is seeing what death really is.

And so Jesus comes to the tomb weeping tears of sympathy and weeping tears of righteous indignation at death.

[24 : 37] but you know the wonderful thing is in order to break its power, to break its curse, to break its enmity, he himself is going to have to go under its power.

He himself just a few, in a very short time is going to feel the full impact of death in all its ugliness and in all its horror.

But as he does that, he comes through it bringing victory for us. And so these moments that we have here are wonderful.

Now we find that the Jews round about verse 37 I'm just going to conclude but some of them said could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?

That's what they're saying. Well on one part they're right and another part they were wrong. see how he loved him they said at first. So the Jews said verse 36 see how he loved him.

[25 : 40] He certainly did. And that was obvious in the reaction of Jesus. But they were wrong when they said could he not have kept this man from dying? He could. Jesus is a complete saviour. They were putting limitations on Jesus.

And we must always guard against that as well. There are no limitations on Jesus Christ. And so in the face of all our pains and tragedies and sorrows I believe that this section here of God's word is one of the most powerful, one of the most meaningful passages in scripture that we can meet anywhere.

Because this is how we see Jesus dealing with death. This is his reaction to death. And he hasn't changed. May we all give ourselves over to Jesus so that we will derive ourselves personally.

All the benefits that he has won for us. That flow from him. In order that when we come to die we will know what it is to fear no evil as we go through death's dark veil.

And that we will know what it is to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. To be able to face death knowing that the best is yet to come.

[27 : 04] Because Jesus has won, he has conquered it all. Let us pray. O Lord our God we give thanks for the great victory that has been won on Calvary.

We give thanks O Lord for the way that the soul of our Saviour is bared so often. It's amazing to see the humanness of Jesus tied in and mingled with the perfection of who he is.

And we pray O Lord that we may all of us rest and trust in this Jesus as our Lord and our Saviour. Watch over us all we pray and do us good.

Take us to our home safely and bless our meeting in the hall afterwards as young people will get their prizes and gifts and bless the cup of tea that will be had there.

Watch over as we pray and take away all our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Our concluding psalm is Psalm 116 from the Scottish Psalter.

[28 : 09] Psalm 116 from the Scottish Psalter. The tune is Cunningham. From verse 4 to verse 8, that's on page 396.

Psalm 116