

Title: Jesus Wept
Text: Luke 19.41-44
Theme: The consequences of a life of unbelief
Series: Luke
Aim: I aim to call my people to embrace the urgency of living for Christ above all.

Read Text:

Word spread that Jesus was near. His raising of Lazarus from the dead had created a stir and the fact that Lazarus was alive and well added to the fervor. When he finished the final leg of the journey from Jericho to the Mt. of Olives, word got to Jerusalem that Jesus was near. Passover was near. The crowds in Jerusalem were massive. Jesus had been to Jerusalem a few times, but most of the time he was in Galilee and not Judea. This probably contributed to the disdain the Pharisees had for him, because, being from Nazareth, centering his time in Capernaum, not hob-nobbing with them, only added to their suspicion of him being an outsider. Therefore, the actual people of Jerusalem were not in proximity to Jesus like the people up in the Sea of Galilee region were. But on this week, the nation came to Jerusalem for the Passover. And not just from the countryside, but Jews from that part of the world would make plans to travel to Jerusalem in order to be there as well. There was a lot of excitement and talk, and with the resurrection of Lazarus, along with all the other stories of his miracles, and the city being influenced by visitors who were first hand witnesses, the anticipation was intense.

Jesus and his entourage start heading down the western side of the Mt. of Olives. In front of them and slightly below them is the city of Jerusalem. We are used to seeing pictures of the Dome of the Rock from the perspective of the Mt. of Olives. That is not what they saw. When you crested the top of the Mt. of Olives heading west, you would see the eastern side of Jerusalem. Towering above the eastern gate was the massive Temple rebuilt by Herod the Great. He did not live long enough to see it completed. The project took 80 years and when it was done, it was by all accounts one of the grandest structures in the entire world. The Talmud said that if you have not seen the Temple, then you cannot say that you have seen a beautiful building. The craftsmanship was incredible. The engineering was remarkable. The attention to detail was everywhere. This building would take your breath away. The area of the Temple measured 35 acres. The Temple itself was 90 feet long by 30 feet wide and 60 feet tall. The exterior was covered in a brilliant white limestone and intricate gold plating. If Christ was coming down the western slope of the Mt. of Olives even mid-morning, and, if it was a sunny day (which is often the case there), the reflection of the sun off this building would be stunning.

One Cambridge professor wrote, The Temple itself overshadowed all else in its numinous glory. At the first rising of the sun, its gleaming courts and gilded gates reflected back a very fiery splendor and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away. When strangers ... saw this Temple for the first time, it appeared like a mountain covered with snow.

This Temple was awesome in the true sense of the word and as we will see next week, Jesus loved the Temple. This scene is incredible. The words of the prophets from hundreds of years

before are being fulfilled right now as Jesus is riding on a donkey toward the eastern gate. His entourage is excited, shouting, singing, waving palm branches. John's gospel tells us that a large crowd of people were pouring out of the city of Jerusalem to welcome Jesus and usher him in, into his city. This was a spectacular occasion, but when Jesus saw the city, he wept over it.

1. Jesus wept for those he loved but who did not love him. (41)

"he wept over it, saying, Would that you, even you,....."

When you read these words, you need to feel them deeply, because they are being expressed deeply. The word for weeping refers to a sobbing, even a wailing. Jesus is not whimpering and stifling his emotions so as not to ruin the party. He is crying as he is pleading out loud. And he is voicing his anguish to those that he knows, like these Pharisees (39-40), who reject him.

Following Christ is the most important and greatest thing you could do with your life. It is more than believing he existed, like you believe that Abraham Lincoln existed. Following Christ means to love him. My aim as one who is instructing you from the Bible is to faithfully teach what the Bible says, so that you will know Christ, love Christ and trust Christ. As you come to understand him, I pray that you will see that he is worth loving, more than anything or anyone else.

I can tell you that Jesus is worth loving more than anyone or anything else, but how do you know that's true? Can I prove that somehow? Is there a way that you can see the real heart and character of Christ? Yes. Let me explain it this way. Girls, what should you want in a guy? Someone who lives in the gym and can bench-press a KIA? Not necessarily. You want to see his character. How does he respond to adversity? How does he treat people who are in need? How does he treat his mom? How does he respond when he is rejected, doesn't get his way? True strength is not measured in pounds, but in faithfulness under pressure. This is what we see demonstrated so deeply in Christ.

Jesus weeps over the city because he loved these people. His coming to Jerusalem was a genuine offer to be their King and Savior. He was doing this for real but he also knew that they were going to reject him. He loved them and they did not love him in return. Jilted lovers can be some of the most dangerous people because jilted lovers reveal that the only person they loved was themselves. People find themselves terrified and trapped in a relationship because they know that the jilted lover could snap, stalk, threaten and turn violent with tragic results. Jesus weeps, but not because of his loss. He weeps because in rejecting him, they lost out on his affection and safety. Their rejection is going to cost them everything and Jesus weeps over this. You get what you worship for good or for ill.

If Jesus loves those who reject him this much, how much do you think he loves those who love him? I want you to know this about Christ so that you will believe him and embrace him. Where are you going to find affection that deep?

It is so beautiful to hang around children who have been raised in a setting of security and love. Children like this tend to be confident, delightful, and secure. The love they receive from their home grounds them so they are not fazed by all of the drama and demands of a fickle and evil world. These kids know where their home really is. It is like Teflon. Threats, taunts, dares to do stupid stuff don't stick to them. The same thing is true about a wife who knows that she is cherished by her husband. She is not insecure about being measured by other women, or competing with others for her husband's attention. Being deeply loved is one of the greatest things you could ever experience. And I hear this over and over at funerals. Children and grandchildren who are now successful and accomplished adults will get emotional as they describe the feeling of being loved and treasured as a child.

I know that many of you did not get that from your parents. I wish you did. Some of you did not or have not received that in marriage. But it is yours in Christ. His affection is real. When you come to faith in Christ you are united to Christ. This union is a beautiful and personal theological reality that grounds us and identifies us. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem in order to die for you so you can be with him forever. Actually, it is more than that. "For God (the Father) so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." That eternal life is not just living a long time, it is life with God forever. The love of Jesus displayed here is not just his love, but the love of our Triune God who is all in on the plan for your redemption. Jesus wept for those who did not love him, because they missed all of this.

2. Jesus wept because he knew what they refused to believe. (42)

Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."

Most of us have watched in fear as someone we love makes a decision that we know will betray them. The nation has, by all intents already rejected Christ and the events in the next few days are going to display that as well as seal their fate. The hope of the Jewish people for peace, is the same hope for all people. It is found in Christ. It is only found in Christ. Without Christ, there is no peace with God. When a person is actually at peace with God, that soul is at peace. That soul is one with, in unity with, in harmony with, is comfortable with, is at peace. There is no conflict, no angst, no drama, just rest, joy, enjoyment, delight, acceptance and security. There is nothing greater.

Yesterday, Cathi and I ran a 1/2 marathon in Traverse City. I used to measure runs in time, then in distance. Now I do in Motrin. When I was younger I was trying to set personal records, trying to qualify for something, etc. Now, I'm just happy to be alive. In the past I would feel all this pressure and nervousness. I would sleep terrible the night before, and dream that I missed the start. Now, I'd be kind of relieved if I slept through the event. I seriously enjoyed the run because I literally had nothing to prove. That is what it is like to be "in Christ." You have nothing to prove. You have nothing to earn or qualify for. Christ died for you, in your place. His death paid for your sins. When you trust in him, the judgment against you and your sin is removed

from you because it was taken by Christ. You are at peace with God and free to enjoy the run. But they refused to believe in Christ and with that they rejected the only means for peace.

People who are at peace with God are at peace and therefore are at peace with other people who are at peace. Without that, there is no peace. Jesus knows he has been and will be rejected. He knows that their rejection will not end well. He knows what is going to happen to this city, this temple and these people.

3. Jesus wept because he knew what was going to happen. (43-44a)

We have the hindsight of history, though most of us have no concept of the weight of this warning by Christ. Perhaps this will help. Imagine that you are a guy in high school and you are attracted to a girl that you befriend and get to know. Over time, you are really drawn to her and you know that you love you and you are willing to do anything for her and you aim to show her that. But she has this old boyfriend who has some terrible hold on her and you know he is her worst nightmare. So, you set out to be a godly, faithful, hard-working guy, the kind who can be trusted, who can provide, who will protect, who will sacrifice who would be a great dad to kids. You get a job, you save, you buy a house, you do everything to provide for her, but when you try to woo her, she ends up with this scumbag. You know what is going to happen, but she won't listen. She lets him move in. He doesn't have a job, a car, a place to stay and she is the one paying all the bills. A while later you see her wearing sunglasses, trying to cover the bruises on her face. You see that she is losing weight, hair getting thin, eyes have lost their brightness. You try to talk with her, but she won't. Then one day you get the news. She is dead. Her boyfriend, in a fit of rage, hit her so hard, he killed her.

You knew it was going to happen. Jesus knew what was going to happen. In a few days, the Jews, hating Christ so much wanted him to die by crucifixion. They were not permitted to kill someone like that. They needed the Roman government to do their bidding. So, they appealed to the Roman governor to carry out their demand. They rejected Christ and appealed to Rome and they got what they wanted. They got the death of Christ and they got Rome. Rome demanded submission and the Jews, never known for humility, stubbornly refused and even rebelled. 40 years later, Roman armies destroyed the city of Jerusalem and burned the magnificent Temple to the ground. In order to describe the destruction of that event it would probably take me 4, 60-minute r-rated talks. Somewhere between 600,000 and 1,000,000 died of starvation, burned to death, executed, sold into slavery, with about 2,500 chosen to fight each other or wild animals to death in arenas for the sick pleasure of a blood-lusty audience.

Jerusalem was a large city and an ancient one. It was in existence long before Israel ever entered the land under Joshua. It had layers to it, plus sections. Underneath it were tunnels which exist to this day. In 70 A.D. the Roman general Titus, along with 4 legions of Roman soldiers surrounded Jerusalem just before Passover, which meant that he trapped hundreds of thousands of people inside. Titus came, like Jesus at Passover, not to save, but to destroy. This is what Jesus saw. The Jewish historian Josephus, who was with Titus said that there were 1,000,000 people in the city. He barricaded the city. He surrounded it on every side. He

hemmed it in, starving it to death. After about 6 weeks, he broke into the city, and began to destroy it one section at a time. It took his armies about 3 ½ months to completely destroy the city. I could tell you account after account of the killing, raping, burning, and frenzied wrath that was unleashed on the city. In an effort to protect the temple from the Romans, thousands of Jews went to the temple area where they were killed, most of them with their throats slit. In the frenzy of the defenders and the attackers, the Temple was set on fire. 10,000 Jews died in the burning Temple. The heat from the fire was so intense that the gold melted and ran between the stones that were the walls. These stones were broken apart so the gold could be extracted.

For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another within you.

This prophecy by Christ is so accurate in describing beforehand what happened, that some have said that Luke wrote this after Jerusalem fell. The internal evidence from this book and the companion book (the book of Acts) is clear that Luke wrote this in the mid 60's. Luke wrote this account to provide certainty and evidence for the things that the early eyewitnesses were saying about Christ. The benefits of embracing Christ are beyond our ability to grasp. But there is another edge to that sword, another side to that coin. The consequences of rejecting Christ are massive as well. There is no middle ground. What happened to Jerusalem is a preview of what this world will be facing. On that day, do you want to be in Christ and protected by him, or outside of him, facing the consequences on your own?

4. Jesus wept because he knew it did not have to be this way. (44b)

When something catastrophic happens to you, you want to know, what went wrong? Kyle Busch, NASCAR driver, who earned roughly \$250 million in his career, died at 41 this week, from pneumonia. How on earth? We look for the black box, literally and figuratively. Could you have prevented this from happening? If you knew then, the consequences you are facing now, would you have ever started going down that road? The rejection of Christ by the Jews happened over time. What happened right here was the final nail in the coffin for them, but not for you. What are you to think about this?

Luke 9.51 says, "*When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*" From the rest of chapter 9 until this point in 19 we have been on this journey and now we are here at Jerusalem. What have you learned? For those of you who have not yet professed faith in Christ, I pray that you will hear me. Do you see yourself in this story? You may be have some vague respect for Jesus, and you may have some respect for those who truly follow him, but your unwillingness to put your complete faith in Christ is simply because you are willing to take your chances and go it alone. Like the Jews, who ultimately said, we'll save ourselves. We'll take matters in our own hands. I don't need to be born again; I was born right the first time. It sounds bold, but when the city is burning and the end has come and there is no one to rescue you, your bravado will be your curse and you need to reckon with that. One of the themes in this section is how humility before God leads to repentance and faith. God delights in

forgiving the humble. But if you see yourself as a self-made man, even a religiously smug person, one who thinks you are just a bit better than others, you will never know the grace of God because you do not grasp just how much you need it. One day the consequences of rejecting God's grace will come. Like the Jews, it didn't have to be this way. There is a better way. Rejecting Christ comes with a cost that no one can really pay.

For those of you who profess faith in Christ, there is some good stuff for our souls here too, isn't there? One of the questions I asked myself was, "when was the last time that I wept over the fate of those who are rejecting Christ?" I appreciate some of the work that apologists do in explaining and defending the gospel, but we need to guard our hearts from just trying to win arguments through zingers and one-liners. Our mission is to reflect Christ in truth, and in love. Behind the faces of many people who are hostile to what we believe are broken and empty souls who have no hope and a future of utter despair. We need to pray that our hearts are fashioned after Christ's, so that even in the face of disrespect and rejection, we are way more concerned about their future, than being respected.