

Does Jesus Care? John 11:28-37

INTRO:

When I think of this passage two hymns come to mind. The first is a hymn that confidently declares: *“No one understands like Jesus / When the days are dark and grim; / no one is so near, so dear as Jesus, / Cast your every care on Him.”* What a wonderful truth this is, that Jesus understands the pain and confusion in our lives. The second is a hymn that asks a question in the verse and answers it in the chorus. *“Does Jesus care when my heart is pained / Too deeply for mirth and song / As the burdens press, / and the cares distress, / And the way grows weary and long?”* The chorus assures us, *“O yes, He cares; / I know He cares; / His heart is touched with my grief; / When the days are weary, / the long nights dreary, / I know my Savior cares”*

Do we always feel the way these hymns describe? Are we always sure the Lord Jesus understands what we are going through? Do we never doubt Jesus cares? If we are honest, we would have to admit there are times we wonder if He really understands and we are afraid He may have forgotten to care. This is why this wonderfully encouraging passage in John’s Gospel is important. Here Mary and Martha are in the throes of intense grief because their beloved brother, Lazarus, died. Jesus came down to Bethany specifically to resurrect Lazarus. Jesus taught Martha some important lessons about Who He is in **verse 25**. *“I am the resurrection and the life.”* Today we will look at **verse 38** as Martha went to tell Mary the Lord wants to see her.

I. Mary’s Grieving (v. 28-32)

II. Our Lord’s Weeping (v. 33-37)

I. Mary’s Grieving (v. 28-32)

“And when [Martha] had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, ‘The Teacher has come and is calling for you.’ As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, ‘She is going to the tomb to weep there.’ Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’”

A. John picks up his narrative with Martha going back to Mary and telling her that Jesus is asking for her (**vs.28-29**). We learned in **verses 5 and 6** Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Specifically because He loved them, He waited. Mary loved Jesus too. When Mary heard that Jesus wanted to see her, she drops everything and rushes off to see Him.

1. We see how the Jews with her cared about Mary. They saw her get up and leave and they immediately tagged along (**v. 31**).

2. To better understand this account you need to have a little background in Jewish funeral customs. Custom dictated even a poor family needed to hire at least two flute players and a professional wailing woman. The indications were that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were probably not poor people. Commonly, the bereaved would tear their clothes and dishevel their hair and sprinkle dirt and ashes upon themselves. Typically, this kind of lamentation and wailing would go on for days before the official grieving process was over. While there is no record that Mary and Martha tore their clothes or spread dust or ashes on themselves, they did wail. The word translated **“weep”** in **verses 31 and 33** is a word that means to weep loudly or wail.

C. When Mary found Jesus, she fell at His feet and like her sister pours out her heart to Jesus.

v.32 “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

Mary also showed her hurt and confusion at the Lord’s waiting instead of rushing back to heal Lazarus. She overlooked the fact that had Jesus dropped everything and come running, He still would have been two days away when Lazarus died. We know distance did not hinder Jesus from healing.

II. Our Lord’s Weeping (v. 33-37)

“Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’ And some of them said, ‘Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?’”

A. With **verse 33**, our attention turns to Jesus. We easily identify with Mary’s pain. Yet, John wanted us to see what is happening to the incarnate Son of God, because it tells us so much about our Great God and Savior.

B. **Verse 33** opened with the word, ***“Therefore.”*** Jesus responded directly because Mary wailed and the Jews who came with her wailing. Our Lord not only saw their tears and heard the noise; He saw the pain and confusion in their hearts.

C. Now as John points his literary camera at Jesus, what do we see? John tells us, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Jesus ***“groaned in His spirit.”***

1. Grief is among the most complex emotions anyone can experience. C.S. Lewis said in, *A Grief Observed*, grief is like fear. Grief is also filled with anger, denial, questionings, and pain so deep that you don't think you will ever not hurt again. Do you know of any other emotion so strong and so complex?

2. I am suggesting Jesus grieved with Mary and the others. Some may ask, since Jesus was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, why would He grieve? My father died when I was eight years old. I know the Lord will someday raise him from the dead, but I still grieve.

D. If Jesus grieved with them, doesn't that mean the incarnate Son of God was subject to *“passions?”* Calvin observes *“Some people find it absurd when we say that Christ, like other people, was subject to human feelings.”* I think this is precisely John's point. The Scriptures do not present to us a God who does not feel. Rather they tell us precisely the opposite.

1. In **Isaiah 63:9** we read about the LORD.

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old.”

This probably refers to Israel's suffering under the taskmasters in Egypt. In all of their suffering our God suffered. He identifies with the sorrows and sufferings of His people!

2. Remember how the Lord Jesus Himself spoke to Paul at his conversion on the Damascus Road?

“Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’” (Acts 9:4-5)

The only way Saul the persecutor persecuted Jesus was through his persecution of His church. He feels our pain.

3. Jesus did indeed feel emotion. He did know what it was to grieve, but not as one who had no hope. One of the most precious statements in the Bible is built on this fact.

Hebrews 4:15 *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tried as we are, yet without sin.”*

We can come to Him in our grief and cry out. *“Lord, I HURT!!!”* And He understands.

E. This is why **John 11:35** is so precious. *“Jesus wept.”* He did not weep loudly as Mary and the others did. He wept quietly. But, He did weep. He wept because He knew what Mary and Martha were going through. He entered into their grief. He wept because they were His children and He loved them.

Do you know this Jesus? He cares when His children hurt. He knows our pain, and He cares for us. I have one caution. Don't see in our God a sentimental teddy bear. He is the God who hates sin and who will judge sinners and will judge sin. Does He love? Yes, far more than we will ever understand, but before we can really know that love we need to receive Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord.

Hymn #417 *No One Understands Like Jesus*