

NO MORE TEARS

(Sermon Summary)

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Reading: Revelation 21: 1-8. (v21:4)

It is interesting to stop and think a moment about tears and the place they have in the Bible. There can be tears of laughter or, as is the case here, tears of sadness, grief, loss, hurt and pain. We learn that God wipes away these kinds of tears in the glory of heaven (See also Isaiah 25:8; and Revelation 7:17). This is a very loving and personal action that the Lord undertakes for His people. It is very warm. But it is not just in heaven that He performs this for His people. He does it while we are here on earth too.

1. Tears of sadness here below.

There is no sadness in heaven and therefore no tears of the kind we are looking at here. There are, however, plenty of sad tears that we shed here below.

It is part of our chemistry as human beings that we have the ability to laugh or to cry (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Sometimes we laugh at the wrong things (Luke 6:25) and store up wrath for ourselves. We laugh at the misfortunes of others and can cruelly laugh at the persecution carried out against Christians. Sometimes we are guilty as well of laughing at or about God. Sometimes we weep for the wrong things. The people will weep at the destruction of Babylon (Revelation 18: 9-10). Heaven, however, rejoices at this event.

Some of us weep more readily than others. We are all different in that way. Or if we do not weep openly, we might be weeping in our hearts. We weep at our losses, our hurts, and the pain we feel. We weep over the loss of people. We weep for other people in the losses they suffer. We weep over events that cause us difficulty and disappointment such as exam results, unemployment, or relationship breakdowns. We might find ourselves weeping unexpectedly as a place, a piece of music or a smell remind us of a loss.

Our Lord wept at the loss of His friend, Lazarus (John 11: 32-35). It was a sympathetic response when He saw Mary weeping and when He saw the actual tomb where they had laid Lazarus. He wept for a fallen world and the misery that brings to people. Our Lord shared our humanity and shared in the grief that we experience.

2. The ministry of tears.

Tears can accompany our ministry of prayer, care, self-reflection, and repentance. We minister to the Lord and each other with tears. It is told us in the Bible that our tears find their way to heaven and are recorded there (Psalm 57:8).

We weep with each other, and this is part of fellowship and our life together. It is part of the sympathy we feel with each other in our common humanity and with the life experiences that we all have in common (Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12: 25-26; and Galatians 6:2). This does not mean that we are nosey or intrusive, peering into the lives of others. We are not gathering evidence so that we might disapprove of people. This can be a more serious problem in a small church. Some tears require specialist understanding and empathy. Sometimes we can be too quick in trying to get people to stop shedding tears. There is a proper time to weep (Luke 6:21).

We might be right to weep tears when we reflect on the state of our soul, or the state of the church, or the state of the nation. Our sadness and tears can move us to prayers of intercession. Paul speaks of ministering to people in tears (Acts 20:31). Jeremiah wished that he could weep more tears (Jeremiah 9:1-2; 9:10; and 10:19-20). There is, predictably, a lot of weeping in the Book of Lamentations after Jerusalem has fallen. The nation weeps in Lamentations 1:2 and 1:16. It is the prophet who weeps in Lamentations 2:11, 2:19 and 3:48-50. He reflects upon the losses, the injury, the misery caused to the young and the offence caused to God.

In our day we might well weep over the killing of the unborn, and over the confusion of young people over their identity and who they are. We might well weep at the emptiness of so many political leaders and their lack of substance and lack of character. Some churches are always looking to be joyful. They might do better at times to stop and to weep.

3. God is with us in our tears.

When God's Son wept, it is as if He was saying, among other things, that He was with us in our sufferings. He is not dispassionate and aloof from us. When the Lord moves towards us, we might be moved to tears as we share His perspective better. There might need to be tears for our families and for our children. There might be tears that we did not know lay in our hearts unshed, but which must now be acknowledged. We weep for our bad choices and moral failures. We weep for the times we missed the way, for failed marriages, for the people we disappointed or who disappointed us.

In those tears He Himself comes to us to wipe them away by bringing strong consolations and comforts. He meets us where we are with all our unfulfilled hopes and dreams, with all our unfulfilled desires, and capacities and gifts that have never been properly recognized or used. He meets us where we are with all our unrealized hopes for ourselves, for others and for our nation.

He helps us to let go of things, to lay down some of our hopes and desires. He enables us to weep with clearer understanding and with new hope. It can be part of us growing up and finding the opportunity to change and become someone different.

Heaven is the final place where we finish with this kind of weeping. That is where we are finally released from all our failed projects and hopes, for our inconsolable losses, for the people who turned against us.

God as our Father acts towards us like a caring parent for a weeping child. He comes with warmth and care, with understanding and consolation. He cares about our tears here on earth and gives us a heavenly home and all eternity to recover. With His smile upon us and surrounded by all the evidences of His love, we will be able to say it was all worth it. In fact, we can begin to realise here on earth that it will be all worth it.