

## The Triumphant Tears of Jesus

February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

Luke 19:28-44

<sup>38</sup>“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”  
<sup>39</sup>And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” <sup>40</sup>He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” <sup>41</sup>And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup>saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>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 <sup>44</sup>and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.””

The Super Bowl is tonight, and though I don't really care who wins the big game, I did become a Russell Wilson fan earlier this week. [An ESPN.com article](#) chronicled the impact the young quarterback – who is an outspoken Christian – is having on the city of Seattle, especially through his weekly visits to Seattle Children's Hospital, where he spends 20-30 minutes visiting patient's rooms, talking with their families, hearing their stories, and praying for the kids.

One visit was to Dave and Kristina Quick, who gave birth to twins in October, one of whom was born in a potentially fatal condition, with an undeveloped heart and intestines. Describing the moment when he – saw Wilson walking into the hospital room, Dave Quick said:

*“I think I probably experienced about 10 different emotions. Shock, disbelief, but most of all, pure genuine joy. For someone of his stature to do that is just amazing. For 20 minutes he enabled us to not think about everything we were going through. He greeted us like we were family. I'd heard about these visits, that it was something he liked to do, but you see him walk through that door and you know he's the real deal.”*

It was a wonderfully encouraging article, but the transition to the sight of Jesus in this text was the phrase: “For someone of his stature to do that is just amazing.” That's why stories like this tend to grip our hearts, and make the headlines. When someone glorious (I know, it's odd that athletes, musicians and actors are the great people in our society) steps down into the world of broken-hearted nobodies and

enters and alleviates (if only temporarily) their pain, it's something beautiful; it warms our hearts, and makes news.

## **Jesus is Bigger than the Super Bowl**

I think the ultimate reason that stories like these tend to warm hearts is that they give a little picture of the Jesus we love and worship. Jesus Christ is a very magnificent Person. He is a Person of stature infinitely greater than Russell Wilson; He, in fact, is the One who holds Russell Wilson, and MetLife stadium, and the whole universe, together. And what makes His stature such wonderfully good news to us is the way His glory and greatness and supremacy are mingled with the greatest tenderness and compassion and care to alleviate the pain of (sinful) nobodies like you and me, who are not only undeserving, but ill-deserving of His kindness and compassion.

It's this harmony between the greatness and the goodness of Jesus that makes Him so beautiful and worthy of our admiration and praise. "Merciful and mighty," we sing, because might is more wonderful when it is *merciful* might, and mercy is more wonderful when it is *mighty* mercy. Both are mingling together here in this passage.

## **The Mighty King**

In verses 28-40, we see the greatness, power, might of King Jesus. From the outset, as He approaches Jerusalem, it's clear that Jesus orchestrates and is in charge of this entire event: telling the two disciples what is going to happen in the village when they get there, and what to say when someone asks what they are doing, v.30-31. So from the moment this narrative moves to Jerusalem, which is the way to the cross, Jesus is making clear that He is in control of everything.

The energy and enthusiasm of the moment culminates in verse 38: "Blessed is the *King* who comes in the name of the Lord!" Jesus is the King, and He meant for everyone present on that day to know it. When Jesus stopped just outside Jerusalem and called for His disciples to get

a donkey for Him to ride into Jerusalem on, He did so to deliberately announce Himself as the long-awaited Messianic King predicted in Zechariah 9:

"<sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly... behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey... He shall speak peace to the nations; His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord,' is a confession that the long-awaited Messiah who was going to put everything right had come. This was not just the King of Israel, but the One who had come to usher in a never-ending kingdom whose reign would spread over nations and galaxies (Isaiah 9:6-7, cf. Luke 1:32-33).

So clearly, Jesus is a Person of great stature, power, greatness and supremacy.

### **The Weeping King**

Which makes what happens next all the more surprising:

*"<sup>41</sup>And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup>saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!"*

We've just seen that Jesus is the King, with all authority and power, sovereignly in control of His destiny, going as it had been planned. But as He drew near to the city that had rejected His terms of peace (that is the meaning of v.42; not they were ignorant of the information concerning how to be peace, but they did not approve or embrace the terms that He had given, cf. Matthew 7:23), a city full of rebels and traitors to His good and righteous rule, and people who He *knew* would soon be plotting and executing their plan to kill Him (v.47), He does not call down fire. He weeps!

He is so filled with love for His enemies that it breaks His heart and moves Him to tears. Of course, He will do more than weep. He is "going up to Jerusalem" to experience in His own body of flesh the

judgment that these sinners deserve for their rebellion against God. But see in these tears the grief and compassion He has towards ruined sinners.

### **Are Jesus' Tears Authentic?**

We need to dwell here for a bit, because we could easily misunderstand these tears by getting the impression that they are an expression of frustration or bewilderment that Jesus is unable to get the praise He deserves. We know that because He says in verse 40 that He can make praise rise up from stones, and He's already said (18:31-33) that this rejection and persecution and killing of Jesus is not the failure of Jesus' plan, but the fulfillment of it. He is not crying because He is unable to get His way.

That's why He says at the end of verse 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.*" Jesus has already indicated that this hiding is part of His Father's good pleasure, and He rejoices in it:

*"<sup>21</sup>In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>22</sup>All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."<sup>23</sup>"*

There is something very beautiful here, but very complex. Jesus is moved with pity to the point of tears as He contemplates a situation that He has chosen in His sovereign purposes to bring about. He feels authentic sorrow over this situation (Jerusalem's hardness of heart and spiritual blindness), even though He has appointed the situation. But are these tears, in fact, genuine? If He has appointed this; if He could fix this blindness by revealing Himself but has chosen not to do it in this case, can we really say that His tears are sincere? If this

compassion and tenderness is such a beautiful thing, then we need to know if this beauty is just a mirage.

We must first admit that the emotional life of God is beyond our ability to fully comprehend. Who can comprehend that Jesus hears in one moment of time the prayers of ten million Christians around the world, and compassionately sympathizes with each one personally and individually, even though among those prayers some are broken-hearted and some are bursting with joy? How can God weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice when they are both coming to him at the same time – always coming, with no break at all?

### **The Emotional Complexity of Jesus**

So we need to beware of using our own intellectual resources to determine what Jesus is and is not capable of feeling. We need to submit ourselves to the Book He has inspired. And what He has said there is that there is a sense in which the perishing of hardened sinners grieves Him, and a sense in which it delights Him (cf. Ezekiel 33:11 and Deuteronomy 28:63). Like the cancer that destroyed my aunt's body and took her life, but softened her to hear and receive the gospel in her final hours before death, there's a sense in which the coming judgment grieves Jesus, and a sense in which it delights Him.

In one sense (the lens through which I view my aunt's cancer in isolation from the larger picture, and see only the pain and heartache), Jesus does not delight in the death of the wicked. He weeps over sin and judgment. But viewing things from another, wider lens (the lens through which her cancer provided the occasion to hear the gospel, that I might rejoice in God's inscrutable, but wonderful plan), Jesus sees it as right and praiseworthy to hide the terms of peace and to humble man by consigning him to his own sin and bring him into judgment, so that

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, [\*Are there Two Wills in God?\*](#)

the full panorama of God's perfections might shine the brighter in the end.

So, yes, the tears of Jesus are a sincere and authentic expression of His affectionate care, but they do not contradict or interfere with His supreme governance over all of creation. Those who have rebelled against King Jesus and moved beyond repentance by rejecting His terms of peace will not be able to gloat that they have made the Almighty miserable. Jesus really weeps over human sin and rebellion, and He really rules over all, so that human sin and rebellion are used by Him to demonstrate the glory of His justice and power in the exercise of His righteous judgment. And in this, He rejoices.

This is part of what makes Jesus so beautiful. If He willed good, but was helplessly impotent to carry it out, He would not be worthy of our worship. And if He exercised His rule over all with cold, passionless stoicism, He would not be worthy of our worship. But the heart of Jesus is so noble and great that He has sincere compassion and affection for the enemies that He has chosen in His justice to leave in their rebellion, and its consequences.

### **Knowing, for the Sake of Loving**

One last question: why should you care about this? I am not interested in waxing philosophical about the emotional complexities of Jesus in order to satisfy intellectual curiosity, or feel inflated with pride about how we have probed the Divine mind. The only kind of knowledge worth having is knowledge that leads to love – for God first, and also for people – the people of the nations and of our neighborhoods.

Jesus' tears of sovereign mercy<sup>2</sup> came in the context of His mission to save a rebellious people from sin and restore them to God's family. And that mission continues on, by the Spirit, through people like you

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<sup>2</sup> This phrase is taken from [the sermon](#) of this name, by John Piper.

and me. It is a costly mission, and if you give yourselves to it, there will be pain. Like our King, we are to be people who lean towards need, not towards comfort. For Greg and Lisa Giordano, that means waking up in the middle of the night to find scorpions on your wall, dropping off your crying kids at school in the morning so you can learn a language, driving 8 miles one way to dump your trash. You throw yourself into the Foster Care system, or pursue an adoption, or help a young man battling a drug addiction, and it's going to be *costly*.

Without a strong, clear, biblical conviction about the sovereign tears of Jesus – that He weeps over the stubborn rejection of His terms of peace, even while resting in God's sovereign decree to hide “these things” from some for the sake of His glory – you will have a very hard time loving people like Jesus. The sovereign rule of Jesus gives you boldness and courage to press on in the firm knowledge that the One on whose behalf you go will not fail to accomplish His purposes. And the broken-hearted tears of Jesus give you permission to weep when your heart breaks over sin, rebellion and hardness of heart, lest you become hardened and cynical and unable to truly love like Jesus loves.

The great and mighty and triumphant King is a tender, weeping King. So don't be afraid to weep at the sorrow you encounter as you love others for Jesus' sake. But like our merciful and mighty King, weep with the deep peace that comes from knowing that God is in control, and that His wise purposes will infallibly come to pass, for His glory and for your good.