

John 11:35

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[0 : 00] Now let's turn to the passage we read in John's Gospel, John chapter 11 and verse 35.

John chapter 11, verse 35. These words, Jesus wept.

And this little verse tells us big things about the Lord Jesus Christ.

It shows him in a most marvelous light. Now, maybe we all know that this verse is well known because it's the shortest verse in the Bible.

But for everybody who knows that, I wonder how many know its real meaning and its real significance.

[1 : 02] Because you see, it might be very easy for us to know such details about the Bible. Which is the shortest verse or which is the longest verse? And yet not to know what the real meaning of God's Word is.

It's easy for us to trivialize the things in God's Word. And also, of course, it's a sad comment on the depravity of the human heart.

That these precious words are even used as a swear. Surely that shows to us the total desensitization that takes place when people have turned from God.

That the things that are most beautiful and most precious are trodden in the dirt. These words, although it's a very small verse, the smallest sentence you could possibly have of just two words. Yet these words tell us most precious things about the Lord Jesus Christ. And give us an insight into his work that is quite unique.

[2 : 17] I want to notice with you some things about what's shown us here. The first is that this teaches us about the humanity of Jesus.

It is probably true to say that John's Gospel, the whole Gospel, was written to emphasize the humanity of Jesus as well as his divinity.

In the late first century AD, John was probably one of the few apostles still living on to that time. And at that time there arose a movement in the church or an emphasis called docetism. Which really tried to say that Jesus' humanity was not real.

Now that may seem a bit strange to us because the kind of attack that we have today is people saying Jesus' divinity is not real. In other words, oh yes, there was a real man called Jesus of Nazareth, but he wasn't the Son of God.

[3 : 29] He wasn't divine. But at that time there was this attack being made. Yes, people could understand stories about God's coming among men and that sort of thing.

But they couldn't accept that Jesus would therefore be a real man, a real human being. And particularly they believed that it was impossible for God to suffer.

Therefore, this body that Jesus had, it must have been just the appearance of a body. It must have been just the appearance of a human being, not a real human being or a real human nature.

Now, although the, as I've said, the tendency in our own age is to play down the divinity of Jesus, yet we always have to guard against the opposite extreme in any kind of doctrine.

And there can be a tendency towards that opposite extreme even amongst ourselves. So that, yes, we emphasize the true divinity of Jesus, and we would stand by the fact that Jesus is the eternal Son of God.

[4 : 48] But we can, in our thinking and our emphasis, play down the real humanity of Jesus. And John, especially, was writing his Gospel to make clear, yes, that Jesus is the eternal Word.

The Word was with God, and the Word was God, he says, right at the beginning of his Gospel. But he also writes his Gospel to make clear that people knew that this one, this Word, became flesh, became real flesh.

And he walked, and he talked, and he lived, and he cried, and he worked with people, and eventually he died upon the cross. John was at pains to bring out the real humanity of Jesus. He mentions that he was tired and he was hungry as he sat down by the well in Samaria when he spoke to the woman who came to draw water there. John makes it clear that his human nature was a real human nature.

He wasn't just a visitor from another planet, as it were, or from just another world that didn't operate the same way as us. It wasn't a ghost. It was someone who had flesh and blood like ourselves.

[6 : 06] That is the humanity that the eternal Son of God took when he came into this world. And John, here in this passage, again shows this true humanity of Jesus, and he shows the very real vulnerability of Jesus, here when he tells that Jesus wept.

And it's all the more remarkable because he tells us this in the very context which shows Jesus' divine power. Jesus, in just a moment, is going to do the unthinkable, the unheard of.

He's going to raise a man from the dead, a man who has been dead at least four days. What more could there be of an indication of Jesus' divine power?

Yet, within a breath of that, it is emphasized that Jesus was truly human, and Jesus was vulnerable in his humanity. Jesus wept.

Weeping is, of course, something particularly human. Animals don't weep. Nor, as far as we know, do angels weep.

[7 : 23] But human beings weep. Human beings cry. Because that is part of what it means to experience the intolerable tension between, on the one hand, being made for glory, but on the other hand, living in a world of sin and misery.

And Jesus knew that intolerable tension as well. When he took our human nature and lived among us, although he himself had no sin, nor did he commit sin, yet when he took our human nature and lived among us in this fallen world, he experienced that tension as well.

And he experienced those things which led him to shed real tears and to feel that choking sensation that you know, and you and I know so well, when we feel that intolerable tension between the longing for something better and the reality that we are confronted with.

Now, I want to stress how important it is that John here and the other Gospels tell us about these things about the Lord Jesus stressing his true humanity.

Because, you see, only a true human being, a real human being, could play the part that Jesus came to play.

[8 : 57] Only a real human being could take our place before God. You see, it was not just enough for God to mount a rescue mission to send someone to rescue us by his power.

For, you see, God's law had been offended. God's law had been broken. And God's justice and righteousness demanded that his justice be satisfying, that the price be paid for our sin, and that it be paid not by an angel, not by an animal.

All the sacrifices of the Old Testament were inadequate to pay the price of sin. Not even by the eternal Son of God in his absolute divinity.

It had to be paid by a man. It had to be paid by a second Adam. It had to be paid by someone who was really of the race of Adam. And so the Lord Jesus Christ, when he came into this world, he took a real human nature, a real human nature that experienced all these pains, and all these troubles, and all these trials that we experience.

That's how crucial it is that Jesus is truly human. It had to be a real man who would bear our punishment and who would die our death.

[10 : 33] That's why, you see, these writers, and especially John and his Gospel, they are so at pains to point out the real humanity of Jesus because they know its significance.

And so tonight, as we read these things and we consider them, this is one of the greatest things we must meditate on for ourselves. That God has created this great salvation for us whereby the Son of God comes and therefore he has the power and he has the authority to do what he did.

Yet he is joined to a true human nature so that as a man he can represent us and he can substitute for us.

And so tonight, we rejoice that Jesus is not only the eternal Son of God, but he is also true man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. So that he is the one who truly paid the price for our sin so that all who come to God through him can know that their sins are forgiven because sin was punished at Calvary.

And if your sin was punished there, then you have no need to fear the judgment of God anymore. And you can know that forgiveness. You tonight trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the one who died for you.

[12:04] But there is one other thing I want to stress about the humanity of Jesus before I leave it. The old expression for this was the manhood of Jesus.

And of course, because of the way in which language changes, that is not completely what we want to say. It is the humanity of Jesus.

It is not just that he is a man, a male, but he is a true human being representing the whole human race. The Greek language has two words for man. One meaning human, and the other meaning male.

But, there is a sense in which also I want to stress here the manhood of Jesus. because Jesus is our model.

He is our model of what it means to be human. But I believe also he is our model of what it means to be a man, to be male. He is a model of manhood.

[13:10] And that is an area in the world today that is under great attack. And there is a great deal of confusion about what it means to be a man. And people are confused as to their manhood, as to their identity.

On the one hand, you get the kind of macho image of somebody who would certainly never cry. When did you ever see James Bond or Indiana Jones cry?

You've got this kind of hero, macho image that men try to live up to. Or on the other hand, you maybe got the other extreme whereby a man ceases to really have any kind of distinction concerning his manhood.

So, you've got these kind of extremes and these kind of confusions. But with the Lord Jesus Christ, you see what real manhood is. You see someone, yes, who has strength, the kind of things that are traditionally considered male.

Great strength of character. Great bodily strength also to endure what he endured upon the cross as well as before it. But we see also one who has a tenderness and a kindness.

[14:34] One who was moved with compassion when he saw people in need. And one here who wept when he saw the sorrow and grief of his friends.

You see, he was unashamed to weep because he was quite secure in his manhood. And so, you are to be a Christian man.

You are to seek to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, you are to seek to be strong, to be able to help those who are weak. but also, you are to be unafraid of that sensitivity and that care and that compassion that the Lord Jesus Christ had.

So, we shouldn't be ashamed to shed tears and to weep out of sympathy with others and out of concern for the needs of those dear to us or those for whom we have pity.

so, we've looked at the humanity of Jesus. That's one of the great things that is stressed here by these famous words, Jesus wept.

[15:46] But also, we have stressed here the sympathy of Jesus. We've already touched on that, but I want to explore that with you a little bit more. You see, verse 33 explains why it was that Jesus was kind.

when Jesus saw her weeping, that's Mary, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

Where have you laid him? He asked. We are told on at least two occasions that Jesus wept, Jesus cried.

He wept here and he also wept over Jerusalem. seeing its rejection of him and seeing the faith that awaited the city of Jerusalem.

And so Jesus is rightly known as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It was prophesied of him in Isaiah 53 that he would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

[16:52] And you see, throughout his life he endured all kinds of hurts and disappointment and he was misrepresented and scorned and opposed. So many reasons we might think why Jesus might have wept.

But we never read on any occasion that Jesus wept because of his own sadness. Because people had hurt him or rejected him.

the occasions where we read that Jesus wept were on occasions where he was concerned about other people.

And that I think says a great deal to us about how we should weep. You see, we can be maybe over-sentimental with regard to our own hurts and our own pains.

and we can perhaps be very easily moved to tears when we think of our own sorrows. But how easily are you moved to tears for the sorrows of others?

[18 : 01] Maybe the sorrows of those in another part of the world that you see on television, those starving in Somalia or those suffering the brutality of the war in the former Yugoslavia or maybe someone in your own family or maybe your neighbor or maybe somebody in need that are you moved to tears by their experience as easily as your own experience?

That can be a test to you of how closely you are seeking to follow the Lord Jesus Christ for he was more ready to weep for others than to weep for himself.

You see, Jesus here was hurt by the hurt of others. Yes, he loved Lazarus himself. And yes, there is no doubt that he felt pain and sorrow because of that loss, but Jesus knew what he was going to do.

Jesus had the whole thing as it were under control here, but that didn't stop him crying because he was moved with compassion because of the genuine and real grief of others.

They didn't know, although people like Mary and Martha trusted him, they didn't know what he was going to do. They just couldn't conceive of it. And there they were in their deep sense of loss.

[19 : 24] They had lost their beloved brother. Others had lost a beloved neighbor or friend or member of the extended family or whatever. Jesus was moved with compassion by their hurt, by their sense of loss.

He entered into their experience. And it wasn't a kind of just condescension that he was entering into their experience. He had the real same human nature as there.

He knew the same pain of loss, that same pain in the face of death. And so Jesus was weeping not particularly for himself and his own loss, but because he saw that loss in others and he knew what it was that he experienced it.

So the writer to the Hebrews rightly say we have a great high priest, one who is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses.

That's what the Lord Jesus is, a great high priest able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses, for he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.

[20 : 38] You see, the Lord Jesus knew all the temptations that our human nature is heir to. He knew the same sense of loss, and so he was able to have sympathy with others, and show compassion to them, and here he entered into that experience, and here he wept because of their loss.

So, Jesus tonight sympathizes with you, in your condition, whatever it may be, we have all different kinds of problems, but whatever the problem is, and whenever that problem may come, it may not be today, it may be tomorrow, it may be in the future, but whenever it comes, know that Jesus is full of compassion towards you.

when you weep, Jesus weeps with you, you know that from what is said here concerning him, he feels your pain, God has united him to us, we trust in him, so we can know that he has that fellow feeling with us, and he has that love towards us in our need.

But the final thing I focus on is just this, we see to hear, I believe, the anger of Jesus. Now that may seem a strange thing to say, after we've been talking about that gentle and tender side of the Lord Jesus, having sympathy with those in their loss and in their grief.

But you see there's a word used here, and it's used twice, that speaks of something more than just being moved with compassion. it's a word that is used in verse 33, and then again in verse 38, deeply moved.

[22 : 28] He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. And then verse 38, once more deeply moved, Jesus came to the tomb. Now this is an interesting word, and it's quite an unusual word.

It's a word that in the Greek language came from the sound made by an angry horse. You ever heard a horse snorting when it's raised or angry?

That's the word that was used for that sound that the horse made. And from that it came to be applied to human beings, when they were deeply moved with anger or indignation about something.

And it would appear to me that at least something of that shade of meaning is still kept here in this word as it is used of Jesus. And I think it's important to stress that too. We've got to ask the question, why would Jesus be angry here? Well, he wasn't angry at the people for crying and wailing.

[23 : 42] He was concerned for them and he had compassion on them. he wasn't angry at himself for delaying because all that had been in his plan.

Probably the truth of the matter is that by the time the message had come to Jesus, Lazarus was already dead because it took Jesus some time to travel from where he was to the hometown of Labyrinth.

So there wasn't any cause there for anger with himself. Why was he angry? Why was he deeply moved? Why was he indignant? Well, the answer is that Jesus was angry at the cause of suffering, the cause of grief, the cause of death.

not at the people or at this particular experience, but because Jesus was seeing beyond that to the cause of these things, the cause of these things being sin and evil.

If there had been no fall, if there had been no rebellion against God, if there was no sin, there would never have been suffering, there would never have been grief, there would never have been death.

[24 : 59] But all these things exist in this fallen world, and Jesus here expresses anger because of it. Now, how do we tie that in with what we know about other things the Bible teaches about God's will being done in the world?

And people sometimes have tried to see a kind of inconsistency here, because people, some people represent the whole idea of God's will as being some kind of fatalistic thing, that people believe that, well, whatever will be, will be.

Now, if Jesus had that attitude, whatever will be, will be, he wouldn't just not have been angry here, he wouldn't have wept either, because what was the use of it? But that is not the attitude that we are encouraged to have by the biblical emphasis upon God's will.

The Bible makes a distinction about God's will. Yes, in one sense, whatever comes to pass has been decreed by God's will.

But there is another sense in which God's good pleasure is made known to us. In other words, what God desires. And we see this in the case of Jesus here.

[26 : 28] And God's good pleasure, God's will in that sense, is set against all evil. Yes, in his permissive will he may allow evil to take place, he may allow sin.

But he hates all sin, and he is set against it. And so his revealed will in this word has made clear his implacable opposition to sin and to evil.

Now that is important because there are those whom, as I said, those who say that, well, God's will means whatever will be, will be. And some who are enemies of Christianity would say, well, what sort of thing is that?

That's no use. You can't change the world if you believe that, if you believe that sort of fatalism. And there's one book in particular that was written by somebody who was trying to illustrate that.

It's a book called *The Plague* by a French existentialist writer called Albert Camus. And he wrote the book trying to show how a priest who held to that kind of view couldn't really fight against the plague, the disease that was raging in this town.

[27 : 40] He just resigned himself to it. It was God's will. And the person who fought against the plague didn't really believe in God. But you see, that is a total misunderstanding of the biblical truth.

Jesus here was angry at sin and at evil in the world and he was not angry at himself as the Son of God. He could be angry because he hated sin and he hated evil and he had come into the world for the very set purpose of destroying sin and destroying evil.

And so the person who follows the Lord Jesus Christ too is not only someone called to be compassionate to those in need, but he's called upon to be angry against sin and evil in the world. Now anger is something that can easily be abused and twisted for our own sinful reasons. But there is such a thing as righteous indignation and anger. And we see it in the Lord Jesus Christ's life on several occasions, especially at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the way in which they abused their religious power.

He looked round at them with anger, we're told, on one occasion. And so too the Christian ought to have a place in his life for righteous anger.

[29 : 10] We have to be careful that we in our sinfulness don't go over the school. But there are certain things in the world that ought to make us angry. And when we consider the great corruption of the world by sin, the destroying of what is beautiful, the undermining of all good relationships, and all these things that have been caused by sin, it ought to make us angry.

When we consider death itself, there ought to be something in us that says this is not as it was meant to be. this is a work of the devil. This is a destruction of what is good.

This is something unnatural, even although God has allowed it, and even although God gives us grace to pass through it. So the Lord Jesus Christ here hates what is sin and what is evil and what it has led to.

And so he is deeply moved in this sense. So then, we've learned quite a few things from this smallest of all verses in the Bible.

We've learned of the humanity, the true humanity of Jesus. We've learned of the sympathy of Jesus. And we've learned of the anger of Jesus.

[30 : 32] It's the shortest verse, but it can give us never-ending comfort if we truly know it and truly take it to heart because it tells us of the true humanity of Jesus, his real sympathy with us in our need and in our grief and in our trouble.

And it tells us of his implacable anger and hatred against sin and evil so that one day all of these things will be destroyed and will be no more.

He will create a new universe in which there will be no pain, no crying, and no death. Now to be part of that world, we must accept this one, this one who wept there at Bethany, this one who wept over Jerusalem, this one who gave himself upon the cross to take away the sins of the world.

We must accept him as our Saviour. And we too can know that true humanity that Jesus displays as he wept there in Bethany.

Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[31 : 55] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. insecure. Michael. Amen.