

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK TWENTY-ONE: THE TEARS OF JESUS

READING

32 When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.” 33 When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. 34 “Where have you put him?” he asked them. They told him, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Then Jesus wept. 36 The people who were standing nearby said, “See how much he loved him!” 37 But some said, “This man healed a blind man. Couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?” 38 Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. 39 “Roll the stone aside,” Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man’s sister, protested, “Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.” 40 Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?” 41 So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. 42 You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.” 43 Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!” John 11 (NLT)

TEACHING

In this story, Jesus’ friend Lazarus has died. Lazarus’ sisters, Mary and Martha, had sent a message to Jesus that Lazarus was very sick, but by the time Jesus arrived it was too late—or at least that’s what they thought. Jesus walks onto the scene and displays sadness, anger and confidence—all in the face of a terrible tragedy.

What does this teach us about Jesus?

- 1) Jesus’ sadness shows us that he enters into our pain. The shortest verse in the Bible (11:35) simply states, “Then Jesus wept.” Jesus didn’t remain emotionless in the face of death and loss. He responded with real tears. And he did this even knowing that in a few moments, he would turn this great grief into an even greater joy. Jesus never guaranteed that we will avoid loss, but He did promise to be present in our pain.
- 2) Jesus’ anger shows that he hates sin and the effect of sin in our lives. The phrase “deep anger” made the original reader imagine a furious bull stomping its hoofs and angrily snorting as it prepared to charge. Jesus hates sin and he came to rescue us from the penalty of sin and the power of sin. One day he will free us from the very presence of sin.
- 3) Jesus’ confidence in the face of death teaches us that He has the power over life and death. We can trust him even in situations that seem beyond hope. With just the power of his word, Jesus can speak life into any situation, any life and any heart.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- What makes you sad? What do you do when you are sad?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, who had died?
- What happened when Jesus said, "Lazarus, come out!"?

CHILDREN:

- In this story, who had died? Who were his sisters?
- What do we learn from Jesus' tears? (Why did he cry?)
- What did Jesus do for Lazarus? What does this show us about his power?

TEENAGERS:

- How do your friends deal with their sadness? How is it the same or different than how Jesus enters into Mary and Martha's sadness?
- What does it mean for Jesus to be angry at sin and the effect of sin in our lives?
- What is an area of your life where you need more confidence in what God can do?

ADULTS:

- How do you approach pain and sorrow? How is it like Jesus? How is it not?
- What would it look like for you to be angry at the sin in your own life?
- What situations in your life seem "dead?" How can you trust God for a "resurrection" in those circumstances?

PRAYER

God, thank you that you don't distance yourself from our sadness, but you join us. Thank you for Jesus who understands what it means to be human, to be tempted and to experience loss. Thank you that Jesus is praying for me. Help me to be rightly angry toward sin and its effect in my life and the lives of those around me. Give me confidence to trust in your resurrection power at work in this world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

Earlier in this chapter, Jesus has a different type of response to Martha. Read that portion (v 17-27) and notice that with Martha, Jesus offered the gift of words of truth and hope. He reasoned with her. But with Mary He gave the gift of his presence and empathy. Jesus approaches each of us individually according to our needs and how we best receive truth and hope.