

Does God Notice Me in My Difficulties?

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Scripture John 11:32-36, Luke 19:41-44 and Hebrews 5:7 (NIV)

Owing to our limited time together, I will read the passage from John, and ask you to read the others, at your convenience.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

³⁴ 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'"

Introduction

I have noticed that many of us, including myself, are right now, in a difficult spot. It may be that we are struggling to deal with losses – loved ones, confidence, homes, jobs and more. We are doing our best to deal with today's challenges and it seems that even though we haven't even gotten through yesterday's challenges yet, tomorrow is waiting with its challenges.

What we experience in day to day life is relentless; there is no letting up. So I can understand if you are feeling exhausted and drained, feeling at a loss of what to do next, perhaps feeling that there is no hope, perhaps feeling that life is unfair and even perhaps feeling that what is happening to you right now, is something that usually only happens to other people and families.

You may be wondering if God notices what you are going through and does He care? The "off of the top of our head" answer is yes, but how do we convince ourselves that God notices and cares?

These 3 Scriptures stand out for me – a present, a future and a past, and in each of them, Jesus wept as He noticed.

The Present – John 11:32-36

This is this morning's text.

Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha was dead. Death is an unnatural enemy that affects many as it inevitably causes a lot of pain and sorrow.

Jesus wept when He gathered with those who were mourning Lazarus' death. Jesus was not weeping over death itself, because He knew that Lazarus would soon be raised. Jesus' weeping was not the same as the mourners and musicians who were focussing on their loss and the hopelessness of the situation.

Jesus wept when He was confronted by the wailing and sobbing of Mary, Martha and the others. He noticed their situation and was deeply moved by it. With a troubled heart, He felt their loss and suffering.

Jesus wept for the living, not the dead.

Regardless of what you are facing or what is going on in your life right now, you are alive. Although it may feel as if your very situation is sucking out the last bit of life out of you, the situation is incapable of doing this, because it is God that has given you life and it is God who speaks life into the desperateness of our situations and troubles.

This fact gives you a choice between focussing on life or hopelessness. I know that many times when we are down and out, it is hard to find hope. But what if Hope finds you? One of Jesus' names is Immanuel – God with us. Psalm 46:1 reads, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." God found you as a sinner, loved you, forgave you, has never left you and never will He leave you.

The Future – Luke 19:41

"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it."

Jesus is taking His last trip to Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her (Luke 13:34). Yet Jesus wept when He saw the city because the

residents had hard hearts and in about 40 years, Jerusalem would be caught in a gruesome siege and many thousands would die.

Jesus saw into the future and wept for the living.

This leads us to a fundamental question, particularly when we are between a rock and a hard place, “what will tomorrow bring; is it going to get better or worse?” For the residents of Jerusalem, their hard hearts were not in alignment with Jesus’ tender heart. Jesus “...longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, (Luke 13:34).

Here is what we need to know: whatever tomorrow may bring; Jesus’ is already there. When facing an uncertain tomorrow, do it with your heart aligned with Jesus’ tender heart.

Hebrews 4:16 reads, “Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” When tomorrow comes, receive it in God’s mercy and grace.

The Past – Hebrews 5:7

“During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.”

Jesus’ tears followed His prayers, petitions and an outcry. The cross lay ahead for Him, an innocent man and much suffering lay ahead on His way to the cross. He was sorrowful, distressed and troubled (Matthew 26:37) and He was sweating blood in His anguish (Luke 22:44).

Jesus was very much in touch with the reality of His situation as well as our sinful situation and His emotions reflected this. In one of Jesus’ darkest moments, He showed compassion for you and me and did what the Father required because it was a life or death matter for you and me.

Jesus said in Matthew 27:46 “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) Do you realize that because Jesus said that, you and I will never have to say it?

Reverent Submission

Hebrews 5:7 speaks of a “reverent submission.” Some translations speak of Jesus fearing the Father. Jesus was heard by God the Father because He truly worshipped the Father who strengthened Him.

This brings us to the realization that when we approach God with our troubles and challenges, we can do it in one of two ways:

1. In a self-reliant pride; a hard heart, which is the pathway to tragedy.
2. In reverent submission; a humbleness, which is the pathway to Godly strength and help.

True reverent submission asks you to make peace with the purposes of God (i.e. His solutions) and the timing of God. In faith, cast your problems on Him, leave them there with Him in trust and depart with the peace of Christ.

Conclusion

Jesus was weeping differently for the occasions we discussed and there were three different outcomes:

- He wept for the living, who believed in Him and the outcome was life.
- He wept for the living, whose hearts remained hard and the outcome was tragic.
- He wept over His impending painful fate on the cross. The outcome was, for us, life.

Weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15) as Jesus did. We, as believers, can sympathize with one another because Jesus has set an example, we belong to the same family, we go through similar/the same difficulties and challenges and because we are not part of a cold and unfeeling world.

You are not alone; God is with you and you are part of His family.

Jesus notices, Jesus wept, Jesus brings life into the hopeless situations that we face.

Amen.