

What Moved Jesus to Weep

We view the Passion narrative with hope, knowing the “rest of the story,” as Paul Harvey would say. However, the women and disciples who went to the tomb that first resurrection Sunday were overwhelmed by grief and despair. Hear the deep disappointment in the words of Christ’s followers on the road to Emmaus as they spoke concerning their crucified Lord.

“But we were hoping that it was He who was to redeem Israel. Moreover, today is the third day since these things happened” (Luke 24:21).

Each of us has experienced the ups and downs of life. Some days we are filled with hope for our future, and other days it seems despair will overwhelm us. Life can often feel like a roller coaster ride.

- We were hoping to get that promotion and raise at work—only to be passed over one more time.
- We were hoping to have our first child—only to miscarry again.
- We were hoping the medical test would be negative—only to discover the cancer had returned.
- We were hoping our kids would avoid the typical teenage rebellion and mistakes—only to be heartbroken when the police officer came to our home.

At times, our hope seems pretty certain. At other times, the roller coaster dips to the bottom of the hill or around a dark corner and robs us of every ounce of expectation we ever had. Is there hope after the darkness?

What Will You Do While It Is Still Dark? (John 20:1-3)

“Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she came running to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have put Him.’ So Peter came out with the other disciple and they went toward the tomb” (John 20:1-3).

Near the close of the sixth day of the week, the crucified Christ was laid in a borrowed tomb. Because of Sabbath laws, the women had been prevented from doing the customary care for the body. Yet, they watched where Christ was laid then went home to prepare the spices and ointments for anointing His body later. After resting on the seventh day, they now were going to demonstrate their love and care for the Master.

Matthew and Mark speak of it beginning to dawn or the sun rising, but Luke said “the morning,” which indicates it was probably before sunrise. How did she plan to roll the heavy stone away? We sometimes tend to divorce or separate ourselves from the narrative of Scripture, but imagine this situation. Would you want to be wandering to the cemetery carrying an armload of spices and ointments in the dark? (Remember the demoniac Jesus had delivered in the tombs—not to mention the fact that Mary Magdalene had some experience dealing with demons herself.)

Imagine, how frightened or even angry Mary would have been to see the stone already rolled away! It was as if someone wanted to intensify her pain by robbing the grave. I would have been hotfooting it back to look for the guys, too! Hopefully, the sun was starting to peak over the horizon by now because this would have been some dangerous running ground. That didn’t hinder Peter and the other disciple (believed to be John) from running even faster to the tomb.

What do you do while you’re still in that dark place

of hopelessness and despair? Do you focus on the obstacles to your deliverance and healing or do you trust that Jesus can roll any stone away? Are you carrying an armload of obligations and responsibilities or are you offering the sweet incense of intercessory prayer and ministry to the Lord? The Psalmist wrote: "Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (141:2).

Sure, there's light at the end of the tunnel and victory when the trial is passed, but will we continue to pursue Jesus even when it's dark as hell in the hallway?

Will You Keep Looking for Jesus Through the Tears? (John 20:10-13)

The disciples didn't bother to try looking for the missing body or the resurrected Lord. If they believed the empty grave clothes indicated He was risen, why didn't they send out a search party to find Him? Instead, they went back home! Were they like the fellows on the road to Emmaus? Were they going back to have their own pity party?

Is that how we respond to seemingly hopeless situations in our lives? We could be out looking for another job, but instead, we sit home and pout over the one we lost.

We could be going for a second medical opinion or, better yet, making some positive diet, exercise and lifestyle changes to improve our health. Instead, we sit in the recliner with a big bowl of ice cream and sugar cookies, weeping salty tears. We could be seeking help from a qualified Christian counselor, pastor or trusted friend. Yet, we stay home alone and nurse our wounds.

In His last sermon to the disciples (recorded by John just four chapters earlier), Jesus talked of leaving and going to prepare a place for them. He also spoke of persecutions they would face for His sake, but He didn't say, "Go home and have

a pity party.” He said:

“I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Mary might have been weeping, but she kept looking for Jesus through her tears. In fact, the word used by John for “weeping” means loud, uncontrollable wailing. Tears are not wrong. Scripture tells us Jesus wept, and He even cried out with a loud voice from the cross. Yet, there comes a time when we need to dry our tears and start looking for Jesus in the middle of our pain because He has promised that He works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

The only time *klaio* (word describing Mary’s weeping) is used when speaking of Jesus’ crying is when Luke tells us that He experienced loud, uncontrollable wailing just before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (19:41). As He looked over the city and wept, He said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace” Knowing in a few days He would be betrayed and handed over by His own disciple to be crucified, He was weeping about their lack of peace.

When all seems dark and the difficulties of life seem to multiply, when the enemy tries to steal your joy and rob your peace, keep looking for Jesus through your tears. Keep believing in the power of the resurrection. Keep hoping for the Light of the world to penetrate your darkness! He died that you might have life and have it more abundantly.

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