

Jesus sits with us in Our Grief and Loss

Rev. Terrance Jacob on John 11:1-45 March 22, 2026, SALC

How many of you have experienced some kind of loss that you grieved or are grieving? When we talk of grief, we don't only refer to grief over the death of a loved one. Grief from loss of health, loss of a job, loss of a relationship, grief when something is taken from you - the go on. I think I can safely say that we all have experienced grief from the death of a loved one. As we read the story of the grief of Marth and Mary, perhaps you thought of your own grief and loss. Imagine yourself being there with Martha and Mary.

Perhaps we too may have cried with them.

As Jesus approached the town of Bethany, Martha ran out to him. She said, "Lord, if you were here, my brother would not have died. Even I know God will give you whatever you ask." Even I know? Perhaps a reference to when Jesus told her that Mary had chosen the better thing - to sit and listen to His teachings - whereas Martha was busy cooking and doing the chores. She must have muttered at the time, "Huh, better thing! Without me y'all will starve." But that's another sermon. Thank God for the Martha's in this world - they serve, but they also know their faith. In her grief, Martha being angry with Jesus for taking so long to come, also remembers Jesus's upsetting words about "Mary choosing the better thing." Anger and blaming are some of the ways grief manifests.

When Martha calls Mary, she comes and sits at Jesus's feet and says the same thing, "If you were here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, he was moved and disturbed or upset.

Now Jesus knew from the beginning that He was going to call on The Father to raise Lazarus up. He knew from the beginning that there was

going to be a miracle. In fact, He even told his disciples that Lazarus was asleep. So why was he sad? Was he lying? Was he play-acting?

No, Jesus felt the pain of his friends. I can imagine Jesus getting down where Mary was sitting in the dust, like he did with the woman I referenced a few weeks ago - the woman who was about to be stoned - he sat WITH her in dust in her pain.

There is a song we know: "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus... Jesus knows all about our struggles." He knows our sorrows, and he is there right with us. Not a prayer away. Not a whisper away. He is right there. The song goes on "He will guide 'til the day is done." He will be with us until this ends, until all else ends.

In the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many were trying to gloss over it with pious phrases. They said, "God knows best" "God is allowing it." "Let's see what God is using this for." Others said, "It's Punishment...from now on people will turn to God".

Then there are those who started turning to God. People who otherwise don't go to church were asking pastors for messages, online services, daily prayer recordings, and other rituals to give them hope.

People were also being public about their faith. Around us many say faith is a personal thing and people don't want to talk to people about it... but people were putting it out there. They are being vocal, even on social media with prayers and reflections.

As the pandemic claimed more lives, or prevented people from burying loved ones "normally", whether from Covid or other illness; as people became lonely and isolated and could not even celebrate births, weddings and milestones, many lost hope. Then many didn't know what to do with God. God just wasn't working for them.

Even as Christians, it was difficult for many to quote Romans 8:28, which works for most ordinarily: "all things work together for the good for those who love God." Was it and is it working out? But the thing I want us to look at is: "not that God won't work it out - trust me God will, even if we don't see it because we want it our way." The place I want us to go to from scripture today is encapsulated by two powerful words of divine love: "Jesus wept". Jesus cried with Mary and Martha. Jesus cried with the whole village! Hallelujah Jesus cries with me! He cries with you. Wait! Jesus comes and sits down with you, He also puts his head in his hands like you, and he cries. He feels your pain. "Where have you laid him? Jesus asked. His emotions were visible. Pain was palpable. When the Jews saw the pain and tears of Jesus, they said, "Look how he loved this man. Look how he loved Lazarus."

But "love for Lazarus.." was not the reason for the pain of Jesus. The pain was like the emphatic pain we feel when we go to a funeral, or when someone experiences loss. When you see someone crying and feeling pain. If you have any blood in you, you too feel the pain. The pain of a crying child or the grief of even a stranger, let alone when someone you love is expressing their grief and loss.

Jesus felt that pain. Today as we go forward in Christ's on this Lenten journey, even as a church with many grieving - whether loss of a loved one, whether from the hurt that came with past conflicts, or pain from other difficult times in our lives, know this: Jesus feels your pain. He will walk with you through this. You don't know how it will end. Mary and Martha themselves did not know how it would end, but I can assure you that they felt the hand of Jesus on their shoulder. And they knew that Jesus felt their pain, and believing that He is the Christ, they knew they were not without hope. Beaten but not broken. Smitten but not without hope. Hot but not charred. Cold but not frozen. Knocked

down but not knocked out! God is going to work it out. Let Him share that pain. It's what The Lord does.

So no matter what you are going through, don't do anything, right now. Let Jesus sit with you in your loss and rest in that for now. And see what God will do! Even if the loss is not remedied and remains a loss, by Grace you will be resurrected - not just in the end, but now in this life. Trust Him. Amen