



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 26, 2014

Pastor Randy Ott

Midweek Lenten Worship

Sermon Text: [Luke 23:26-31](#)

Shed No Tears for Jesus!

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Tragedy evokes emotions, right? If you watched the news the other day and saw the families that were gathered together who had loved ones that were on that Malaysian airliner, the airline said to them, "At this time we believe there are no survivors and that everyone has been lost." Then it showed the families reacting. Some lashed out in anger, but by and large, they were all doing the same thing. Tears were flowing. Mourning and wailing like we heard from the women that were following Jesus as he went to the cross. Loved ones gone. Brothers. Sisters. Husbands. Wives. Sons. Daughters. Now all believed lost. It's natural, that's what you would expect, wouldn't you, from a tragic loss of life. Unexpectedly, people's lives cut short from an airplane flight. Emotions come. Tragedy brings out emotions. Tragedy often brings out tears. That's what we see in what I read to you from Luke, right?

Jesus was a tragic figure, humanly speaking. He had done nothing worthy of death. They couldn't even get their sham, lying witnesses to agree on a good lie to convict him of death. That's how bad their case was against Jesus. Then finally they heard what they considered blasphemy, when what they actually heard was the truth, that Jesus is the Son of Man who is at the side of the throne of God, that Jesus is the promised Messiah who would come into this world. But they considered it blasphemy, so now he had to die.

They got him to Pilate. Pilate heard their accusations and he knew it was bologna, right? He knew that Jesus was an innocent man. But even though he knew he was innocent, he had Jesus beaten, hoping that it would appease the crowd. He did all these things to Jesus. He offered them a choice of Jesus or a murderer, and they chose the murderer. Finally he just washed his hands and said, "He's innocent. His blood is on you." Humanly speaking, tragedy, right? An innocent man being put to death and it's obvious to even the person that is sentencing him that he is innocent. Tragedy.... especially when you think about Jesus.

How many times in the Gospels do you read that his heart went out to people? He had compassion on people because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He met their needs in his compassion. He healed the sick. He fed the hungry that were out in the middle of nowhere just to listen to him, because he had compassion on them. Here

was a guy who had done nothing wrong. Here is a guy who was absolutely innocent of all wrong-doing his whole entire life, and he's being condemned. A lot of the people knew that he was such a kind, loving man. Yet, the tragedy unfolds.

He has been beaten. He's been mocked. He's been ridiculed. He hasn't slept. He's endured all this physical pain and torture that he can't even carry a piece of wood across town. So they grab Simon, slap it on him and say, "You carry it behind Jesus." A crowd is there following him, kind of like when you are driving and there's an accident in between the interstate and everyone slows down so they can look. That's kind of what they were doing. There are those women, weeping and mourning and wailing, and they were good at it in their culture. This wasn't a slight tear on the side that they quickly brushed away before anyone else saw it. I have to believe they were carrying on like you see at times on television.

But now comes the surprising words from Jesus. Here is the guy that couldn't even carry that piece of wood, yet he stops and looks at these women and summons up the effort to speak these words... "Don't cry for me."

That doesn't seem to make sense, does it? He's innocent. He's going to die. Why in the world would he say "Don't cry for me" as though this isn't a tragedy? This seems to be the greatest tragedy that has ever been committed. But he says, "Don't cry for me."

We go back to the night before when he was in the Garden and he prayed. He was suffering and sorrowful to the point of death and he said, "Father, if it's your will, take this cup away. But if it's not your will, then let me drink it. Let me drink it to the last drop." Jesus is not really tragic in that sense that it evokes our tears or that he wants our tears because it's so tragic. It was for this reason that he came into the world. Not only to be innocent his entire life, not only to live perfectly under the law because you and I can't, but also to be our substitute and take the punishment our sins deserve. That's why he can look at those women, and that's why he can look at us and say these surprising words, "Don't cry for me. Don't view this as a tragedy. This was our plan from all eternity."

That doesn't mean we shouldn't be moved. He tells us to not be moved to tears as though this is awful. I would suppose we are to be moved when we see our Savior's love. I think we should just stand in complete and absolute awe that our God loves us this much that he was willing to do this for us.

He loves us this much to be perfect in our place and endure the agony of the cross and to endure separation from the Father. God separating himself from God. It boggles the mind. Yet he did it because he wanted your sins to be paid for. We should be moved. We should just try to wrap our head around how great is his love. Yes, we are saddened by our sins, but we don't cry for Jesus, because this is what he came to the world for. He says, "Don't do that. Instead, see in me your Savior. See in me your forgiveness. See in me your peace. See in me your confidence." That's what he

wants us to focus on. It's an amazing love that your God has for you even though you and I and everyone else are such awful sinners. But that's his love.

But he does tell us there are tears to be shed. Do you remember hearing that? He does tell us to shed tears. Here's the surprising part again. "Don't cry for me. Cry for yourselves and your children," he says to these women. What he is talking about is that he quotes an Old Testament passage that says people are going to say to the mountains fall on us and the hills cover us, but he's saying the time is coming when you guys are going to endure terrible things. It's going to come because the people rejected Jesus as their Savior, just like they had rejected the prophets, just like all those who reject God's message in his Gospel and his Word and his forgiveness. They are all going to suffer.

In this case, he is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. The time is coming when they are going to suffer. It happened in 70 A.D. at the hands of Titus. Not one stone was left on top of another at the temple. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed and everything they had known was turned upside down. He's saying "At that time, you are going to say 'blessed are those who didn't have kids that have to go through this.' You're going to say 'I wish we never had them so that they would have to endure this agony.'" That's how great God's judgment poured out on that city would be. So he says "Cry for yourselves. Cry for your children."

What is sad, what is tragic, what is truly tragic and remains tragic to this day is every last person that hears the warning of God, that hears the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and turns their back on it, finds something more important to do, something better to do, they don't have this peace. If you're not connected to Jesus Christ, God's judgment will come on you. That's the sad part. That's what I think our God would tell us yet today. "Shed tears for those who don't know what I did for them or who have rejected what I have done for them." Shed tears for them now because on the Last Day, when he divides the sheep and the goats, we aren't going to be crying anymore because we are going to be having our focus on God. We are going to see him face to face.

We will not be in heaven haunted by the faces of those who are not there. So perhaps the time to be haunted by their faces is now, when we can still do something, when we can share the message of the Gospel that dries the tears that we would shed for those who don't believe, so that the Spirit gives to them the gift of faith, so that when they face their last moment they will know like we know that when we die, it's not the end. We're just going to heaven, our eternal home, the place we long for. The time for you and I to do something about drying those tears is here and now.

See his cross. In his cross we see that we don't need to cry for Jesus. That's why he came. In his cross we see the message we need to share with those who we should be shedding tears for. Amen.