

“Out of the depths we cry to you!  
O Lord, hear our voice.” AMEN!

(Sing) “No woman, no cry. No woman, no cry.  
‘Ere, little darlin’, don’t shed no tears,  
No woman, no cry.”

In this song, by the great Bob Marley,  
we find him urging his listener to not cry.

“Everything’s gonna be alright...  
everything’s gonna be alright...  
So, no woman, no cry.”

I wish it were so simple.

Hm, just sing and not have any tears.

But it is not so simple and, really,  
thank God for that!

Tears do not mean that a person  
has lost control, though  
society begs to differ!

Discipline, control, get it together,  
are the mantras we love to project.

But, thank God! We can be honest.

Tears are some of the best tools  
we have to journey and nurture us through life.

And I'll be honest with you.  
These past few months... I've cried... a lot.

And though sometimes I think it,  
I know I'm not alone.

I've become a member of the club. :-)

An affiliate of those who listen for  
a footstep that never comes;

those who listen for a voice that is heard no more.

Songs, holidays, foods inexplicably  
get you choked up.

It was this time, three years ago,  
that all hell broke loose with COVID.

People were dying by the thousands,  
fear was rampant around the world,  
people hoarded toilet paper,  
we separated (physically),  
went crazy washing hands, and

people (our loved ones)

were dying alone in hospital rooms or  
locked away in assisted living facilities.

Many of us still carry that grief around.

And many of us still weep as...  
well as so much was taken away.

You see? We are created to be communal.

To be people that live in community and  
have relationship.

Bonds with one another to know what  
it means to belong to something larger than  
we can be on our own.

So when one of us dies,  
we feel it in our bones with  
that lump in the throat.

Why not do what Jesus did... and cry?

Our texts today lend a shoulder for us to lean on.

The lengthy story in the gospel is probably

a familiar one to you.

Like you, I kinda want to jump to the end  
with the resurrection of Lazarus message and  
tell you that was the miracle Jesus did  
that will inevitably get him crucified.

And while it's true, today,  
it doesn't seem right to drop into this lesson  
at the end when John (the gospel writer)  
took such care in telling so many details  
about the entire event.

So, if I may, I'd like to drop into this text  
at the statement that was told to Jesus twice.

A statement of truth from Jesus' other dear friends.

The statement I mean, of course, is  
“Lord, if you had been here, my brother  
would not have died.”

Both Mary and Martha make the declaration  
to Jesus when he arrived.

I know that anyone who's suffered  
the loss of a loved one comes to grip  
the level of emotion in the sentence,

“Lord, if you had been here,

my brother, sister, husband, wife,  
mother, father, friend would not have died.”

There's everything from accusation to regret  
from sadness to feelings of loss and of betrayal.

Of all people, Jesus, why did you tarry  
to come to be with your friend, Lazarus?

What is so profound, in this long passage,  
is the expressions of emotion  
that are communicated.

There's the apathy which appears  
to be upon Jesus at the start of chapter 11.

His waiting longer to go to see Lazarus  
than (perhaps) he should have.

There's courage, too.

Going to the town of Bethany, just two miles  
from Jerusalem was dangerous since he'd  
just escaped being stoned there by the authorities.

If there's courage then  
there must have been fear.

For without fear there can be no courage.

Was Jesus afraid of the authorities or of what he was going to do at Bethany?

Was Jesus afraid of what the resurrection of Lazarus would mean for him?

This was a hard miracle for the authorities to ignore.

Then, of course, there's the emotion of grief and the jarring statement that Jesus began to weep.

Like the giant weight of grief fell on him and we deduce that he wept for his friend, Lazarus.

Perhaps because he died without Jesus being there?

Jesus would have wept for Mary and Martha. He was close to them, too.

He would have been empathetic to their pain.

Jesus may have wept for himself.

Knowing what this would mean for his immediate future.

These reasons would all be good reasons

for a human being to weep.

Which Jesus was, as being incarnate made him,  
human.

Yet, often I forget that what also  
would have led Jesus to weep was  
that he knew, in that in-between,  
that in the liminal space,

that moment of inaction and action,  
of life and death, he knew that whatever he did...  
he could not take death away.

Incarnate means death will come one day.

Jesus wept in the fullness of all that emotion  
and understanding and was present  
knowing it is ok to cry.

He knew the truth of it.

He could not sing that  
“everything’s gonna be alright.”

At least in trivial or shallow ways.

But he can say, does say:  
“I am the resurrection and the life.”

And if this is true, and we believe it to be...  
then we come to know that resurrection itself  
is penultimate.

That means it's close to the end but not the end.

The ultimate, or end, is life.

“I am the resurrection and the life,” Jesus said...  
“and the life” to recall for us

the intimate connection and reclining with Jesus  
that we witness Lazarus doing with the  
others at the table with Jesus in chapter 12.

When we boil it all down, we find that  
our Christian faith is based upon the truth  
that God has overcome death.

Not ignored it, taken it away, or sugar-coated death.

This is the hope we have that Christ  
has plowed through death and revealed to us  
that death is not ultimate; not the end,  
but a passage way to what comes next...  
resurrection and (in the end) life!

It's an assurance only God can give and

it is our statement of faith when we entrust  
loved ones to God's unfailing care.

Where else would we go in that last hour  
but to the burial place carrying nothing but  
the part of the 3rd article of the creed,

“I believe in the resurrection of the body  
and the life everlasting.”

We'll say those words this morning,  
but maybe say them with a little more meaning...  
feel them more in our bones because  
this is our Easter victory!

Right here on the 5th Sunday in Lent,  
we rejoice at the festival of resurrection and  
celebration of the life because  
you and I may not be  
here in two weeks.

Why not cry when you feel like crying?

“For God will wipe away every tear from their eyes,  
and death [one day] will be no more,  
neither shall there be mourning nor crying  
nor pain any more,  
for the former things  
have passed away.” (Rev. 21:4)

AMEN!