

DMPC Sunday 27th April 2025

Sermon: Why are you crying? (Questions Jesus Asked series)

John 20:11-18

BIBLE: John 20:11-18

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?'

'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' ¹⁴ At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'

She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher').

¹⁷ Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Introduction –

Good morning. We're back to our sermon series on the Questions that Jesus Asked.

This morning's reading is the telling of Mary Magdalene in the garden, looking for the body of Jesus in the tomb but it's not there.

She encounters the risen Christ. She is the first person to meet with the risen Christ but doesn't recognise Him at first, she is so overcome with grief. The passage records that she is weeping and the word used means 'to weep for or bewail', she's sobbing her heart out. She's in the darkest of places.

This is where the gospel starts. The good news of the risen Christ, starts in tears of the broken hearted.

Jesus meets with her. And He asks her these two questions

1. Why are you weeping?
2. Who are you seeking?

And it strikes me that there is something simple, and profoundly timeless in these questions. We could be asked these questions ourselves at times in our lives. And we could ask others.

Let's think about weeping, about crying first.

Your relationship with crying. The myths.

What is your relationship with crying?

Has it changed over the years?

What was the story you were told as a child? About crying?

There's a song called 'big girls don't cry', fans of the film Dirty Dancing will know it well.

And the title suggests well, that crying is for babies, big girls don't cry.

There's another story about crying isn't there? What is it? Someone tell me? Who cries – babies and... girls?

Who doesn't cry – or shouldn't cry – according to this dangerous narrative? – grown ups and especially men!

I bet you've heard that before haven't you?

Crying is not for men.

Has anyone believed any of these things at times in their life?

That they shouldn't be crying. Or crying is wrong. Something to tidy up and wipe your face and move on?

Crying is a sign of weakness?

You should bottle up your emotions, don't let others see them, I'm not sure if that is suppose to protect the one crying or the folk around them....

I think this narrative is still quite strong.

I wonder about how you respond to the tears of other people.

Are you someone that embraces someone when they're crying, goes to them, comforts them...

or are you someone that feels totally uncomfortable... tries to get away, or make the tears stop?

It's all a bit too much to cope with... all a bit touchy feely.

We panic that we might get it wrong.

But you know, tears are good. Scientifically, our emotional tears contain higher levels of stress hormone - so they're a natural way for the body to relieve itself of stress. Releasing stress hormones.

They also contain a protein based hormone which is a natural painkiller.

And... They stimulate the body's production of endorphins. Endorphins are the feel-good chemical that the brain produces.

All in all it's true. Crying really is good for you.

It's also a very helpful sign to others to tell us that we need comfort. To keep a closer eye.

And.... Although in this passage it is Mary that is weeping.... Jesus – the ultimate human being – the example to us all - he cried. There are several recorded events of him weeping.

And so if there are still some unsaid thoughts about tears being unseemly, well Jesus wept. Literally, the bible records it. John 12:32-37, when his friend Lazarus died, Jesus wept.

In Luke 19:41 Jesus is recorded as crying over Jerusalem, he was so sad about how lost so many people were, he cried.

In the book of Hebrews it says 'During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears.... And he was heard because of his reverent submission (Hebrews 5:7).

Jesus cried. In this passage Mary cried. And so we can cry.

And here's the thing. I said that in the past tense. Do you remember that from school?

He cried. He is crying. He will cry. Past, present, future tense?

Jesus cried, Mary cried, past tense. It has happened.

But. It is also true to put it in the present tense. Jesus cries. Today. He cried then when his friends were sad. He cried over the state of the people and how far they were from God.

He cries *now* when we are sad, he cries *now* over the state of people and how far we are from God.

When we weep, He weeps with us.

When we are in our garden moment, weeping and confused, inconsolable, like Mary was, he meets us.

He doesn't turn his head in embarrassment. Or tell us to wipe our face - clean ourselves up...

He doesn't shy away

Jesus weeps with us. And for us. With us in our pain. And for us when we are far away.

I don't know if you were with us for the Good Friday service. It featured poetry, following the stations of the cross, a retelling of Christ's walk to the cross, written by Malcolm Guite. Then on Easter Sunday we had Malcolm's Easter Sunday morning poem, which features this scene in the garden, this passage that we read where the grieving Mary meets Jesus again. I'm going to read two of his poems again in a minute.

The first one is 'Jesus fall the 3rd time', it's set towards the end of his walk carrying the cross, before he is stripped and crucified. It's hard to read. It's hard to think about.

It's perhaps why Good Friday is a difficult day in the Christian calendar. It's grim and it's emotional.

And... well we don't like being sad... do we?
The avoidance sets in. We'd rather think about happier things. Like
Easter Sunday! Thank you Jesus for Easter Sunday!

But the thing is. There's no Easter without the Friday.
There's no life everlasting without the suffering and death on the cross.
There's no shouts of joy, without those tears of pain.
There's no 'Christ is risen' if there's nothing to rise from.

And....here's the other thing. If Jesus doesn't know suffering and pain
and tears.

What use is He to those who are suffering?

He is *fully* human.

If we tell ourselves and each other that Jesus overlooks the raw and
painful side of humanity, that he only does 'Sunday best' – you know,
our best clothes, our brightest smiles....

If we do that, then we put him at a distance, we reframe Him into
something that He's not... he becomes a caricature of humanity...

and let's face it... being human comes with pain and suffering..... we
will all have those days – some of us more than most, but no one lives
a life with no suffering....

If we tell ourselves that that's not a Jesus thing. That he's for when
we've got ourselves together. Not for suffering. Not for all the parts of
humanity. Then we prevent Him from meeting with us in our pain.
And he wants to be with us in our pain.

God wants to be with us in our pain.

God is with us in our pain. We just need to let Him in.

Jesus weeps with us and for us.

I'm going to read the Good Friday poem 'Jesus fall the 3rd time' now.
and you are welcome to think about yourself, your fragility, any suffering
that you have experienced or are experiencing.

And know that Jesus knows. And understands. And stands with you in
it. He doesn't flee. Or hide. He knows all parts of our humanity.

And if the tears flow, that's fine. I pray that Jesus meets you in them.

POEM: IX Jesus falls the third time

He weeps with you and with you he will stay
When all your staying power has run out
You can't go on, you go on anyway.
He stumbles just beside you when the doubt
That always haunts you, cuts you down at last
And takes away the hope that drove you on.
This is the third fall and it hurts the worst
This long descent through darkness to depression
From which there seems no rising and no will
To rise, or breathe or bear your own heart beat.
Twice you survived; this third will surely kill,
And you could almost wish for that defeat
Except that in the cold hell where you freeze
You find your God beside you on his knees.

Jesus weeps. He weeps for us and He weeps with us.
But ultimately there is hope at the end of it all.
It doesn't end in tears. It ends in Easter Sunday. It ends with a shout of
'hallelujah'.
Death and suffering doesn't have the final say.

Please know that.
It does not have the final say.

There is a passage in Revelation, Revelation 21:4, this is one to have
imprinted on your heart...
'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more
death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has
passed away'.

So as much as Jesus is with you in your sorrow, there is something
brighter. Something beyond it, something better. Much better.
Something that turns night into day.

Let's read 'Easter dawn' by Malcolm Guite, you may have heard it on Easter Sunday, but it's worth reading again.... This is Mary Magdalene on Easter morning

POEM: Easter Dawn by Malcom Guite

He blesses every love which weeps and grieves
And now he blesses hers who stood and wept
And would not be consoled, or leave her love's
Last touching place, but watched as low light crept
Up from the east. A sound behind her stirs
A scatter of bright birdsong through the air.
She turns, but cannot focus through her tears,
Or recognise the Gardener standing there.
She hardly hears his gentle question 'Why,
Why are you weeping?', or sees the play of light
That brightens as she chokes out her reply
'They took my love away, my day is night'
And then she hears her name, she hears Love say
The Word that turns her night, and ours, to Day.

Jesus wants to turn your night into day.
Not to push it aside. Brush it under the carpet.
He is with us as we weep.
But He also points us to a day where there will be no more weeping. No
more pain and death. Or war, or aggression or starvation or poverty, or
injustice or fear.

Because love is victorious. And He's called Jesus.
It's no wonder that it's called the 'good news' is it? What good news.

Wrap up

So, let's return to the questions Jesus asks in the garden one last time.

Why are *you* weeping? Who are *you* seeking? He calls *you* by name.

Do you seek a God who weeps with you and for you? Because if you do,
then He's here. He's calling you by name. He is the risen Jesus Christ
who brings hope over despair. Life over death. Light into darkness.

If you're looking for a macho, no tears, pull yourself together and hide your feelings kind of God, then I'm afraid you've been misled. He's not here..

He, Jesus, God the son, wants to weep with you and for you.

He knows *you* and who you seek. And he calls you by your name.

Let's pray.