

I come to you in the name of one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I am not a crier. It's not that I've never been sad, I've definitely been choked up before (the opening sequence of Pixar's *Up* or the selflessness of Bing Bong enabling Joy to make it back to headquarters and restore balance to his best and only friend Riley, both come to mind). And while this has happened at seemingly increasing instances as I've gotten older and as we prepared our way for our daughter to enter this world, I find that in times of grief, I internalize, I appear somewhat stoic, the rock for others in their time of grief. I grieve in my own way, understanding the pain and hurt I feel, but most often assured of the reality that exists beyond this life and while I am sad when someone I know, particularly someone I am close to, dies, I am not a crier. And this is why this passage is so important to me. I see my own deepness of grief that is required to bring forth tears reflected in Christ today.

While I am not a crier, this doesn't mean I have never cried. One moment in my life will always stick with me as a moment of pure grief, expressed not for anyone I knew, but still deeply impactful on my own understanding of this life. Working as a hospital chaplain is an intense and emotionally powerful (and draining) experience. One night, working the on-call trauma shift, I received a phone call requesting a chaplain, an unusual call as most on-call requests came in through our trusty pager. I arrived to the bed side just as the lead neurosurgeon was informing a wife and mother that her husband, her partner, a father and grandfather, was brain dead and was only living through the assistance of the life support machines enabling his heart and lungs to continue working. I would face many tragic calls

like this throughout my summer as a chaplain but this is the only one that moved me to tears, and not just tears but weeping.

You see, this father and husband was basically the same age as my own father, this mother and wife the same age as my own mother. And then I met their children who were the same age as myself and my brother. Here was a family that mirrored mine. Here was a grief that I could only imagine I would experience if I was on the other side of that mirror. Here was a son saying he refused to see his father hooked up to all of the machines, preferring to keep his last memory of him from when they had visited the night before. Here was a family begging their young, inexperienced chaplain to beg the medical professionals to let the man stay on life support until Monday, for as the clocked clicked over to midnight Sunday, it was now Father's Day. I stayed with this family throughout most of the night. But, I took a moment in returning from another call to stop by the chaplain office, to call my own father, and I lost it over the phone.

Today's gospel stands as a stark reminder in the narrative of Christ. Christ is clear in the lead up to arriving at the tomb, in the lead up to being confronted with the reality of human grief, that he is the promise of resurrection realized in the here and now. Christ declares "I Am." It is not up to the last day for resurrection to occur, for those who believe in Christ will never die, and as an expression of this reality, his intention is to always raise Lazarus from the dead. A sign of the power given him by God, a symbol of the resurrection that he will provide to us all, Lazarus cannot be dead for we will always pass from this life to the next through Christ, for through Christ we will never die. Simply put, Jesus is not a crier, because he knows the end of this story. And yet.

I think the power in the moment that we share with Christ when Jesus weeps, is not about the fact that Jesus cries, but the fact that this is the only moment where it is recorded that he does such an act. This is the only moment where grief so overwhelmed Jesus that his human understanding of the world overcame any of the divinity, any of the power that he knew he had. And as Jesus begins to weep, he does not do so simply over the death of his friend. I do not believe that Jesus is weeping only over the death of Lazarus, for he had many chances to intervene in this event. He tells the messenger that this illness does not lead to death but rather will be used for God's glory. As the disciples badger him, he declares that Lazarus is merely sleeping and will awaken at Jesus' call. And, as they continue to not understand, Jesus very bluntly informs them that Lazarus is dead, but that he is glad he was not there to heal, for their own sake, so that they might finally believe. These are not the words of a man who will weep simply over the death of a friend whom he has every intention of raising from the dead. There is something more to this weeping.

In reading this scripture, it is clear to me that Jesus is moved deeply by the grief of those who have gathered around to mourn the death of Lazarus. Jesus loved his friend deeply, the word for love used by the crowd is *philia*, that deep love of friendship, of human connection to another, as opposed to the more commonly heard in conjunction with Christ, *agape*, the love of God. But, even as Jesus loved his friend deeply, it is in seeing the love for his friend by Mary and Martha, by all of the Jews who have come out to pay their respects, which moves Jesus to weeping. Jesus weeps in community with all those who have gathered together to mourn the death of Lazarus. This shared experience of grief greatly disturbs Christ in his spirit, and he is deeply moved by it. This shared experience of grief

teaches Christ, and in turn, teaches God about our human capacity to not only love but grieve for those whom we have loved.

This is key to our understanding of how God learned through the experiences of Jesus. This powerful outpouring for a beloved friend in Lazarus moves Christ to the very core of his being. It penetrates both his humanity and his divinity. It connects our humanity to the divine. And, this helps shape God's own understanding of grief. This is an understanding that must exist for this story to have the ending of Christ crucified and Christ resurrected.

In many ways, this story of Lazarus' death and resurrection after days in the tomb is not an allegory to Jesus' own death and resurrection narrative that is still to pass but has been hinted at throughout his story. Rather, this story of Lazarus, this story of Jesus weeping, is the final piece of understanding his human nature, our human capacity to experience such a deep connection of love that the grief that surrounds us upon the death of those whom we love deeply, grief that shakes us to our very cores. It is in this story that we see God, through Jesus, understanding his creation fully. It is in this story that we see the moment of learning that will enable Jesus to carry his cross, to die upon it.

I am not a crier, but that's ok because neither is Jesus.

Except in this moment. Except when his humanity was laid bare. Except when the community came together in grief to mourn a man respected and loved, even if it was not to the depth of friendship experienced between Christ and Lazarus. Jesus weeps in this moment because he is so truly moved. Jesus weeps in this moment because he understands grief at his very core. Jesus weeps in this moment because that is what we do when we lose

our best friend, our father, our mother, our brother, our sister. Jesus weeps in this moment because God finally understands what God must experience in the death of God's only son. Jesus weeps with us because Jesus is of us, Jesus is fully human. Jesus weeps so that we may know that Jesus understands, that God understands, that our own grief, our own hurt and pain and darkness, are felt too by God, are known too by God, are as fully realized and experienced by God as they are by us. Jesus weeps so that we may weep and know that it is ok, that even though we know the end of the story, that even though we know the promise of eternal life, of resurrection, that we will never die, a promise that is realized through Christ, that it is still ok to weep for our friend.

Amen.