

“Tears in a bottle” A sermon by Lee Ireland  
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church  
November 4, 2018, Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
Isaiah 25:6-9. Psalm 56, John 11:32-44,

Let us pray together: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

During today’s Kid’s Time I held up small bottle that represented my tears. I mentioned that King David believed God put King David’s tears in a bottle. Look at your bulletin. In the Call to Worship we read Psalm 56 and you repeated - **You, God, have put my tears in your bottle.**

Did you ever think that God saves your tears, that God cares enough for each of us to notice when you cry and to save those tears? Does God have a gigantic storeroom with shelves and shelves of bottles? Little bottles, medium-sized bottles and big bottles. And for those who cry at the drop of a hat, there must be really big bottles. All the bottles are carefully labeled with the person’s name. Wouldn’t that be a sight to see if that were the case.

But the point of my comment and of King David’s Psalm to God, is that God cares for each of us – cares a great deal. Cares enough to count our tears. This caring is evident in today’s scripture from John where we read the story about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Most of you know that the verses I read contain the shortest sentence in the Bible: **Jesus wept.** In this story Jesus expressed great sorrow and was disturbed.

**Verse 33: When Jesus saw her (meaning Mary) weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.**

**Verse 38: Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb.**

These verses from John are not the only place in the Bible where we read of Jesus’ emotions. Can you name others? (PAUSE) Luke’s story of Jesus tells us that: **As he (Jesus) came near and saw the city (Jerusalem), he wept over it.** In Matthew’s story of Jesus’ life we read that Jesus showed anger when he said: **You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell?** Of course, Jesus wasn’t always angry or sad, there are plenty of stories in the Bible that show Jesus feasting with friends, enjoying a wedding, and celebrating when the disciples returned from their missionary journeys with wonderful stories about their adventures of spreading the message of God’s Kingdom being on earth.

Some people think of God as someone distant, someone who isn’t involved in our individual lives. Or people think of God as a score keeper, not as a loving parent who cries when you cry, rejoices when you rejoice. God is a loving parent who holds you close in your sorrow and listens to your concerns. We have God who cares for us, who understand our individual lives.

This story of Jesus’ raising Lazarus reveals our God – a God who has compassion and empathy. The good news for each of us is that Jesus freely entered into the suffering of the folks mourning Lazarus’ death. When we read these verses, we see Jesus who experienced

our emotions and knows what we may be going through. That is indeed good news to all of us Christ-followers and a comfort to those of us who mourn the passing of loved ones.

But we cannot always feel that good news when we're mourning, can we? A death hurts. Death takes away loved ones. We are sad. We mourn. However, we are comforted that all will be raised on the last day. As today's Old Testament reading from Isaiah says: **he (God) will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.**

We know about the promise of eternal life. But what about here? What about now? What does this text from John about the raising of Lazarus have to say to us today, to comfort us?

The important point for us today in these verses is that Jesus is the one in whom there is life – now, today, as well as in the future. Jesus is the one who calls us out of dark places. Jesus called Lazarus out of a dark place demonstrating that on both sides of the grave Jesus is life for us. This story of Lazarus makes known to us that there is no death or grief or fear so deep and dark that the voice of Jesus cannot reach into it, call us out and bring new life.

The Presbyterian Church states this succinctly in one of our statements of faith: in life and in death we belong to God and we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Look to Jesus for life, not just in the future, but life for today. When you have life in Christ, you see things differently. Your eyes are opened to the way God sees. You realize you can trust your life to Jesus now as well as in the future. You are given the gifts of the Holy Spirit to guide and teach, so you can live this new life through faith. Does all this happen instantaneously? No, it's a process to put your faith and life in God's hands, not trusting in the world, but trusting in God.

One person said, "You know that God can sort things out, but it doesn't happen overnight. God helps you throughout the whole journey. He wants you to be an overcomer. But you have to give it time". ([www.ncls.org.au](http://www.ncls.org.au), viewed 11/3/2018)

One final observation on the Lazarus story. Did you recall that when Lazarus comes out of the grave that Jesus tells those surrounding him to unbind Lazarus? Jesus directed the Community to free Lazarus from his grave cloths. This simple direction from Jesus points to the importance of the community to your growth in faith, to your life in Christ. We help each other as we change and grow in our faith. That can only be done in community. It cannot be done in isolation.

We do have a God who cares. We have a God who revealed that caring in the life of Jesus Christ. We can take comfort from this story about the raising of Lazarus for it reveals that caring. It reveals there is life in Jesus today and tomorrow and for eternity.

At this All Saints' Day service we are reminded of those who have gone before. We are thankful for the way they lived their life in Christ. We are thankful for their vision for this church and for their service to the community and to this church. Though we miss them, we take comfort in the knowledge that our God cares for us both in life and in death.