

# church of Christ at Greenwood

371 West Main Street  
Greenwood, Indiana 46142  
317.888.8288  
churchofchristatgreenwood.org

July 17, 2022

## **Save Your Tears**

**Terry Slack**

Contained within Luke is an event exclusive to his gospel account. Pilate has granted permission to crucify Jesus and now begins the slow, circuitous procession through the streets of Jerusalem to a hill known as Golgotha. Behind Jesus walks a large crowd of people. Though the crowd consists of a wide variety of people, Luke focuses our attention on a group of women “mourning and lamenting Him” (Luke 23:27). Though some question their motives (were they “professional” mourners present at every execution?), the text appears to treat their sympathy as sincere. Though exhausted and enduring intense pain, Jesus chooses to interact with these weeping women.

“But Jesus turning to them said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.” Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us,” and to the hills, “Cover us.” For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry” (Luke 23:28-31).

It’s a strange message from a man on His way to die. What adds to the intrigue is that these are the only recorded words of Jesus while en route to Golgotha. While the other gospels provide us with Jesus’ words during His trials and His time upon the cross, only Luke tells us what He said in between the hall of Pilate and the site of execution. And what He says is revealing.

### **Tears of worldly sorrow**

As these women follow Jesus, tears of empathy flow down their cheeks. Their grief seems genuine. It’s comforting to know that the hatred expressed by so many was not harbored by everyone. Yet, according to Jesus they weep for the wrong reason.

These were not dedicated disciples, but mere sympathizers. Their tears flowed because of His physical experience. They focused on the “what” of His suffering while totally missing

*Cont’d, next page →*

the “why.” They weren’t lamenting the sins of their leaders in condemning an innocent man. They weren’t crying over the injustice perpetrated by Pilate. They weren’t sorrowful for the hostile attitudes of the hateful crowds who called for His blood. Their cheeks weren’t moistened because they saw Israel rejecting her Messiah. Their tears had everything to do with sympathy and nothing to do with sorrowing over sin. Worldly sorrow caused them to weep. Godly sorrow would have moved them to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10).

### **Jesus’ continuing concern**

Even during His journey to the cross, Jesus was working selflessly to open their tear-filled eyes to the real tragedy that lay before them — they weep for the wrong person. Yes, Jesus would suffer greatly, but His vindication would come through the resurrection. But for those who rejected the significance of His death, their fate would be divine judgment and eternal condemnation.

From the cross forward, the dark cloud of judgment hung over Jerusalem. Eventually, in A.D. 70, the wrath of God would be poured out on this rebellious people. In capsule form, Jesus reminds them of what He had previously taught — the destruction of Jerusalem and the downfall of Judaism (Matthew 24:1ff; Luke 21:3ff). What was happening to Him physically was terrible, but even worse would be the physical and spiritual misery experienced by the Jews as a result of their rejection of God’s plan. When Roman armies surrounded the city, it would completely reverse previously held opinions. Barrenness, once viewed as a humiliating curse, would now become a great of blessing as they escaped the agony involved in seeing their offspring tormented. Future events will be so devastating that the quick death of a mountain crushing their bodies would be preferable to the slow, methodical horror of a siege. Even on His way to the cross, Jesus is trying to get them to see clearly-and thus be moved to alter the course of their lives.

### **Green trees don’t burn like dry ones do**

It is within this context that Jesus utters His puzzling question. The green tree is Jesus in His sinless innocence; the dry, Jerusalem in her utter sinfulness. If the guiltless Jesus suffers like this, what kind of torment awaits those responsible for His death? If the One offering His life as a ransom endured this kind of anguish, what will happen to those who intentionally refuse the redemption He offers? The green tree would ultimately survive the flame. The dry would eventually be consumed.

As these women followed Jesus to the cross, they were right to be moved by His impending agony. But according to Jesus Himself, the real tragedy wasn’t what was happening to Him in the present, but what would happen to them in the future. Should they cling to their inadequate perceptions of His identity, suffering and death, they would be better served to save the tears for themselves.