

## ***JESUS WEPT*** by Debbie Hubbard

*“So the sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love is ill.’ When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This illness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it’.....*

*“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’ ” John 11:3-4 and 33-36 NIV*

There are times when there are no words. The situation is so heart-breaking that you feel it deep down in your soul. I’m guessing we’ve all experienced times like those and that we have felt grief like that at times during this pandemic as we’ve heard so many stories of suffering and loss. As followers of Christ, we have hope. We know that God uses all things for our good and His glory. We know He is sovereign over this virus and all things. But we still grieve. That isn’t because of a lack of faith or trust. It is the natural response of the compassionate human heart to a fallen world.

The story of Lazarus in the Bible tells of a time Jesus Himself grieved. Jesus knew Lazarus personally, this wasn’t just someone who pursued Him in a crowd or heard of His miracles. This was a friend Jesus spent time with. We know Jesus loves everyone, but the Bible specifically states, *“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus”* (John 11:5) Jesus had dinner with Lazarus. Jesus even found Himself in the middle of sister drama with Martha and Mary. He knew this family, and they knew Him - personally. And Jesus knows each of us personally too and we enjoy a personal relationship with Him – He knows our fears, our desires, our longings, our heartbreaks and our hopes. And He grieves with us, just as He did over Lazarus.

We all know how the story ends — Lazarus didn’t stay dead long. Jesus displayed what He proclaimed: He is the resurrection and the life. But in the middle, between death and life, something else happened. *“Jesus wept”* (John 11:35). This begs the question ... why? Jesus knew Lazarus would die, but He also knew Lazarus would live again. He declares it right at the start of the account where he says, *“this illness will not end in death”* (John 11:4) So why did Jesus weep? He could have started with *“Lazarus, come out!”* (John 11:43) but He chose instead to shed tears publicly.

Theologians have theories on this but as Jesus doesn’t ever say why, we really don’t know for certain. But I am glad that he did! As I have pondered on this, I’ve found it such an encouragement. Not only does it show the depth of Jesus’s love and care for Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha and therefore for us too – but it also shows us that even though we know the end of the story, just like Jesus did here, it’s OK for us to grieve and to be real about the pain we feel. We know that as it says in Revelation 21:4 *“He will wipe 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.”* And we can cling to that sure and certain hope daily but we can also rejoice and take comfort in knowing that we have a Saviour who, although He knows exactly how the story will end, weeps with us, just as he did over his friend Lazarus. See how he loves us!