

Session 1: The God Who Weeps

WHAT WE FOUND

- Jesus loved the family at Bethany, and he still delayed; the Gospel holds God's purpose and our pain in the same passage without shame. Martha made her great confession, Yes, Lord, I believe, while her brother was still in the tomb.
- Jesus wept (John 11:35), knowing exactly how the story would end. Grief and tears are not in themselves a failure of faith.
- At the tomb Jesus was not only sad but roused, almost angry. John does not name what at; an ancient and widely held reading takes it to be death itself, which Scripture calls the last enemy (1 Cor 15:26). It was certainly not aimed at the grieving.
- Isaiah 25:8 makes two promises: he will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces. Lazarus previewed the first, in miniature; the second is still open.
- Psalm 56:8: God has kept count of our tossings, and the psalmist asks him to put his tears in his bottle. Nothing you have cried is lost on him.

THREE VOICES WORTH KEEPING

St. Augustine (Tractates on John 49, in summary): Christ wept to teach us what to do with our own weeping; on the groaning he dwells on Christ freely stirring his own human emotion, so that his true humanity would be beyond doubt.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (Sermons on the Song of Songs 26, in summary): he broke off his sermon series to grieve his brother Gerard openly before his monks, and defended those tears as compatible with faith.

St. Thomas Aquinas (ST I-II q. 38, in summary): sorrow is eased by pleasure, tears, the compassion of friends, contemplation of truth, and sleep and baths; a hurt kept shut up inside hurts more.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray Psalm 56 once this week, slowly. At verse 8, name to God one grief whose tears he has kept.
2. Contact one grieving person: no advice, no fixing, presence only. I was thinking of you is a complete sentence.
3. If a tear comes this week, do not apologize for it. Say two words instead: Jesus wept.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Jesus wept."

John 11:35

Before next session: Read Psalm 13 slowly, once.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 478, 994, 1009

THE SEALED SHEET

MY GUESS · SEALED UNTIL WE OPEN THEM TOGETHER

Where is God when we suffer? Write your honest answer below: tonight's answer, not the churchy one. Then fold this page in half, seal it with tape, write your name on the outside, and bring it back next week. No one will read it, including you, until we open them together later in the study.
