

Thanksgiving - Tears for Joy

We all have hurts and sorrows in our lives, but this morning I would like to go around the sanctuary and have each one of us say just one thing we are thankful for. It can be anything... I am thankful for my wife, my job, my kids anything that you are truly thankful for...

This is interactive this morning... I'll start...

Now that we have declared what we are thankful for, I would like to open up into a sensitive area of our lives. I want to look at an area in which we could be so much more thankful to Jesus if we would only embrace a simple concept.

The concept is tears in exchange for joy...

To be clear, this morning I want to talk about what Jesus does with our tears...

Turn with me to Psalms 56:4-11 CEV

I praise your promises! I trust you and am not afraid. No one can harm me. Enemies spend the whole day finding fault with me; all they think about is how to do me harm. They attack from ambush, watching my every step and hoping to kill me. They won't get away with these crimes, God, because when you get angry, you destroy people. You have kept record of my days of wandering. You have stored my tears in your bottle and counted each of them. When I pray, LORD God, my enemies will retreat, because I know for certain that you are with me. I praise your promises! I trust you and am not afraid. No one can harm me

This morning I want to draw your attention to verse 8 specifically here where it reads: *You have stored my tears in your bottle and counted each of them.*

Let's take a look at the narrative of Mary washing Jesus feet with her tears

Luke 7:36-48

A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So Jesus went to the Pharisee's home and got ready to eat. When a sinful woman in that town found out that Jesus was there, she bought an expensive bottle of perfume. Then she came and stood behind Jesus. She cried and started washing his feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. The woman kissed his feet and poured the perfume on them. The Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this and said to himself, "If this man really were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him! He would know that she is a sinner." Jesus said to the Pharisee, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher, what is it?" Simon replied. Jesus told him, "Two people were in debt to a moneylender. One of them owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other owed him fifty. Since neither of them could pay him back, the moneylender said that they didn't have to pay him

anything. Which one of them will like him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose it would be the one who had owed more and didn't have to pay it back." "You are right," Jesus said. He turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Have you noticed this woman? When I came into your home, you didn't give me any water so I could wash my feet. But she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. You didn't even pour olive oil on my head, but she has poured expensive perfume on my feet. So I tell you that all her sins are forgiven, and that is why she has shown great love. But anyone who has been forgiven for only a little will show only a little love." Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven

Embedded within this passage is a rich cultural truth. While we tend to see things in a literal sense based on our cultural perspective, it can often be useful to look at the culture that we are studying. From a practical perspective, we need to ask how many tears would be needed to wash a person's feet? Next, consider that in the culture of the day, the ceremony of foot washing required that a person's feet be immersed. Third consider that the custom was that all of a person's tears were kept in Lacrima jars (Lacrima being Latin for tear) and were valued highly as a family possession. Traditionally these tears were kept for generations.

I have no doubt whatsoever, that this woman's tears during the episode of her repenting assisted in the washing of Jesus feet, but how powerful is it when we consider the potential cultural aspect? If we consider that she poured out all her family's sorrows at the feet of Jesus, there are some serious implications. Literally, all the pain from generations in her family line is laid at the feet of Jesus. This now takes on a special significance and depth doesn't it?

Jesus said: "come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give rest."
(Matt 11:28)

Today in our culture many of us seem afraid of tears. We hand people a box of tissue or a handkerchief as a courtesy. I wonder if we are really valuing the tears or if we are giving the subtle message that we are uncomfortable with a person crying or even that they should stop.

Crying can be healing and cathartic (Cleansing / Healing) in many cases. In Jesus day tears were considered precious. Today, if you were to hand a person a jar and tell them to catch their tears, they might think you were weird or cruel...

Now to the bible... When we look again at the 56th Psalm we see that God holds our tears in jars. Remember verse 8: *You have stored my tears in your bottle and counted each of them.*

I believe that this Psalm can be thought of as a Psalm of thanksgiving. We look back at the sorrows, struggles, strife and things in our lives in which we have cried either privately or publicly. It is a celebration of us looking back at those times and

recognizing that God captured their tears and comforted them in the storm. Moreover that he took note of every single tear...

As alternate possibility... Perhaps the Psalmist was in the midst of the storm and they are choosing faith over fear. They saw the victory to be had in Jesus.

Regardless of the medium whether it be scrolls or lacrimal jars, bottles or in a book the message is clear, God cares, he takes note of our tears and he keeps them dear to himself forever. He does not distance himself from our suffering. He loves us.

So here is my message to you today...

- It is okay to cry and we can even assert from scripture that God expects it. After all Jesus wept.
- We don't have to harbor our tears, we can lay them at the feet of Jesus and God will keep them for us forever, we no longer have to hurt. If we keep them for ourselves then healing takes much longer. But if we pour them out and lay our troubles and sorrows at the feet of Jesus we can have victory knowing that he's got them.

When Julie and I lost those nine babies, I cried over each one so much that my lacrimal jar today would be a 45-gallon drum. I am not ashamed of my sorrow nor am I bound by it, because I now know that Jesus has my tears and that he will keep them forever.

I can now give thanks to God because of his promise to hold my tears in a bottle. He is saying to me that he cares about what my cares forever. He is saying to me that he remembers my pain forever and I can let it go, knowing it is in good hands. I don't have to feel any guilt or remorse about giving my sorrow to Jesus because he will feel it for me forever.

I believe that Jesus exchanges our tears for oil. Isaiah 61:3,4 says:

The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah [is] on me, Because Jehovah did anoint me To proclaim tidings to the humble, He sent me to bind the broken of heart, To proclaim to captives liberty, And to bound ones an opening of bands. To proclaim the year of the good pleasure of Jehovah, And the day of vengeance of our God, To comfort all mourners To appoint to mourners in Zion, To give to them beauty instead of ashes, The oil of joy instead of mourning, A covering of praise for a spirit of weakness, And He is calling to them, 'Trees of righteousness, The planting of Jehovah-- to be beautified.' And they have built the wastes of old, The desolations of the ancients they raise up, And they have renewed waste cities, The desolations of generation and generation.

When these things happen in our lives, it is like we are in ruins, but God wants to renew the desolated areas of our lives. He wants us to be like trees that grow and trust him, and become beautiful.

Let's talk about the oil of joy for a moment...

Why is the oil of joy important?

Nehemiah 8:10 tells us:

Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

It is that joy that God gives us that is our strength. He gives us rest. He gives us peace, his burden is easy and his yoke is light. God takes our sorrow and feels it for us and gives us the oil of joy for our mourning. He gives us strength when we have none. We don't have to sorrow alone. Jesus is with you and stands ready to bear your burdens.

I am so thankful to Jesus for all that he has done. When I think of Thanksgiving. I give thanks for his taking my sorrow and giving me joy.

How many of us today harbor pain in our hearts? We suffer and struggle because we have lost loved ones, parents or children. Jesus stands ready to give you peace and joy, but we have to surrender our tears into his keeping.

This is a hard thing because many of us, if we are honest with ourselves have ever thought that if we stopped crying we would be betraying our loved one. I can personally attest to the fact that I felt that if I stopped feeling the sorrow for our lost children, that I would be betraying their memory. I would feel that I had failed them in some way or that I had defiled their memory. Yet, I have since given my sorrow to Jesus and he has put in my heart a real hope of seeing them all in heaven. A real faith in knowing that he personally cares for them each and every day. When I close my eyes now I don't feel the pain, but I see Jesus singing over my children... And because the pain has ended, my faith is strong and I trust my God!

I will never forget those that I have lost and I will always miss them, but I will live my life in a way, that if they were looking down right now they would be proud of and happy to see.

When I consider my grandfather, he was my best friend. We did everything together. I miss him everyday, but I know that I will see him again. I am not just saying that in some abstracted profession of faith. When I gave my pain to Jesus he has given me the gift of faith, so that without any doubt in my mind, I know that I will be with him again.

Let's step outside ourselves for a minute... If anyone of you came to my office and told me that you were no longer shedding any tears about your loss, I personally would not think that you know longer cared about it, but that you had come to a renewed level of dealing with it. So why do we condemn ourselves?

Consider your lost loved one for a minute... If they knew how you were suffering because of their loss, how would they feel? Would they be delighted that you are suffering over their memory or would they feel upset about your suffering? If they are looking down from heaven right now and seeing you, what would they want for your life? Would they want to see you suffering in sorrow or would they rejoice in seeing you victorious and in joy?

Condemnation is the tool of the enemy. He uses it to keep us from getting strong. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Did you know that the word Messiah in Hebrew actually means "the anointed one" and that the word Christ in Greek means "the anointed one" So if he anoints us with the oil of joy, we are symbolically allowing Jesus to minister to our needs and to heal every sorrow.

This thanksgiving day will you let Jesus do the exchange? Will you take beauty in life instead of the ashes of your despair? Will you accept the oil of joy in exchange for your tears of sorrow?

I can think of no better way to celebrate thanksgiving than to be able to give thanks to Jesus for taking our hurts, sorrows and pain and replacing them with Joy.

Jesus has provided us with everything we need to live a life more abundantly. We just have to pick up what he has given us and apply it to our lives. You are kings, priests, Sons, Daughters, Ambassadors, and a royal priest hood. You can live life to the fullest. Jesus has the victory over your hurts and sorrows, let him have them so that he can say: "Thanks for giving your sorrows to me, I've got them for you. I will care for you hurts and your needs" and you can say: "Thanks for taking them and giving me joy"

Do you want to have a new life that you can truly be thankful for every aspect of today?

Give your tears to Jesus. Lay them at his feet and rise up in joy.

We have declared today so many things that we have and that we are thankful for, yet we can have more joy and more reason to be thankful. Where will you store your tears of sorrow today? Will you give them to Jesus and be filled with the oil of joy in your heart or will you hold your tears in your heart as salt water on an open wound?

Will you pray with me today?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, I have hurts, sorrows, pains and grief that I have not let go of. Please dear Lord, take them from me and care for my troubles. Remove the grieving, grief and despair and grant me the oil of joy for my strength. Lord please grant me the gift of faith so that I can truly do this and know absolutely know that you have taken my tears and counted each one. God please do not let the enemy condemn me for letting go of my pain. Take any guilt from my heart and leave me with a confidence assurance that you have got my cares and that you hold me in the palms of your hands. I ask that the Holy Spirit minister healing to me right now, and that you will sing over me. I ask for peace, joy and an abundant life in your precious name Jesus name – AMEN.