

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are told in Scripture 3 times about events where Jesus wept or shed tears. I think it fitting for us to discuss why. The city of Jerusalem was magnificent in the days of Jesus. People were so blinded by its radiance as it reflected the Palestinian sun that they had to turn their eyes away, as Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us. When Our Lord, preparing to enter Jerusalem, stopped at Mount Olivet’s heights to look toward the majestic city, there was no awe or admiration in His gaze. Instead, he stood silent, his lips quivered, his eyes filled with tears. Jesus just had his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. What would bring tears to his eyes right after that event as he viewed the city?

Jesus might have seen the temple from there, a glorious structure, on which architects and laborers toiled for 50 years and were still not finished. Yet Jesus was saddened by the mockery, shocking insincerity, cold formality, to be found in his Father’s house. Jesus also could see the money changers whom he would soon throw out as they sold animals and exchanged money, piling up profits in the name of religion. Saw the multitudes who bought the best animals and thought that by such offerings they could be cleansed from their sins even though their hearts were far from God. He might have heard the chanting of the Pharisees, who might be saying things like this, ““God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers, tax collectors. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”” The hypocrisy and arrogance made Jesus cry.

If Jesus were here in the flesh today, I am sure that Jesus would shed tears over Canada’s spiritual condition. We have many churches in our land but how many strive to follow the Great Commandment. If they loved the Lord with their whole being, things would change. The preaching of the gospel is pushed into the background. Ask many

Canadians about salvation and they will likely say that they do not need to be saved. Many will say, “no, I’m good, thanks.” No one is good, no not one. Many are filled with greed, lust, hatred, have many secret and disguised sins. We are a people formed through Christian pioneers, blessed above many others because of our heritage, we are a free people. Even so, we have forgotten God, neglected our privileges, spurned our blessings, rejected our Savior. We can find Jesus Christ on Olivet, grief stricken not only for Jerusalem but for many churches in Canada that are more concerned about the things of this world than about saving souls. Many are people pleasing and more concerned about what people in this world think than about what God thinks. “How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?” John 5:44. If this world is to come closer to the Almighty it must start in the churches. To stop the tears of Christ we must go back to the Bible, back to our redeemer, back to the blood of his atonement, back to justification by grace through faith at baptism for good works.

From Olivet the Savior could likewise see the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. He occupied the highest position in OT worship. He alone could enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Yet that high priest, who should have been closest to God, was an unbeliever, a murderer at heart, an enemy of the Messiah. He was surrounded by many Sadducees, who openly attacked Scripture, denied the supernatural and the hope of the resurrection. These men were responsible for their country’s downfall. 20th century Sadducees sit securely in high places, pulpit politicians, who constantly emphasize the separation of church and state to keep God out of the public eye, are on the increase. We need to “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.”

Jesus from Olivet could see Jerusalem’s skyline where were the palaces of the governing officials, imposing structures with high towers; the castle of King Herod, the residence of Pontius Pilate, and Jesus could detect the corruption, deceit, iniquity, practiced within those walls. He wept as He contrasted the doom soon to break over the city. Such a shame that Jerusalem did not have honest, God fearing officials who did the bidding of the people. We should thank God daily for our democratic government, but we should not be blind to the fact that graft, bribery, corruption, have sometimes flourished in our government and many times this is allowed without interruption. We need to be praying for our government.

The Savior sees our afflictions and is moved by our sorrows. Man of sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came, ruined sinners to reclaim, hallelujah what a Savior. “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.” Isaiah 53:4. Should have used a different word. Sympathy involves understanding from my own perspective. Empathy involves putting ourselves in the other person’s shoes and understanding why they may have particular feelings. Jesus has more than pity or sympathy but empathy. “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!” Philippians 2:6-8. Every human experience Christ has experienced, yet was without sin. What a friends we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. Now we have more than a teary eyed Savior, we have a bleeding, dying and crucified Christ. Human tears often mean little; some people can cry at the drop of a hat, but Jesus proved his earnestness when he, the mighty and majestic God, bowed his head

and accepted Calvary. We have no need to cry endlessly over the sins and sorrows of our lives. We can have the inner conviction that we can triumph over temptation, find strength in weakness and be overcomers. “To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--”

Jesus weeps for us, for our sin, for our unbelief, but He offers us joy in His resurrection. May the Lord bless you and keep you in the faith until the day when you attain resurrection, and tears are never shed again. Amen.