

Thoughts of Jesus

The Man of Sorrows

JESUS was not immune to the sorrows of mankind. Like others in this world, He knew the bitterness and grief of misunderstandings, slander and abuse, unjust criticism, false witness, and cruel judgment. Isaiah prophesied that He would be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Isaiah 53:3.

We may think of Jesus as vicariously bearing our grief and sorrows, but let us remember that these were in addition to His own, which must have been sufficient to weigh Him down all through His life on earth. It was not remorse for mistakes and failures on His own part that filled His soul. He knew no sin in Himself, and had no regret so far as that was concerned. His grief came because of what He saw and heard about Him.

Imagine Jesus trying to accommodate Himself to the vulgarity, irreverence, and impurity of village life in Nazareth. How the coarseness in human nature, its lack of shame and humility, its constant absorption in thought of meat and drink, its shallowness and indifference to spiritual values, must have troubled Him. Only an inborn pity and desire to help could have kept Him from showing horror at the sight of blind beggars, stumbling cripples, and offensive lepers who pressed close to Him and cried for mercy.

Jesus suffered much when He saw others in pain and distress. When He heard the moaning of the weeping widow over her dead son, He thrust through the crowd and said to her, “Weep not.” Then with another word He restored the young man to his mother. But the knowledge of other weeping widows up and down the land tempered the joy He had in making this one happy.

We can better know the bitterness that Jesus felt when others suffered as we read the story of Lazarus' death and burial. When Jesus first heard of Lazarus' death He seemed unconcerned. This astonished His disciples, but Jesus knew He could awaken His friend. It was not until He came to the little town of Bethany and saw Mary weeping that His soul was filled with grief. The Scriptures say of that scene:

“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.” John 11:33-35.

The Jews seeing Jesus weep said, “Behold how he loved him!” But it was not for Lazarus that He wept. His heart was touched when He saw the sorrowing people about Him, and with His wider vision He saw also the whole world weeping. He could raise Lazarus and restore him to Mary, but how could He comfort a world filled with sorrow and woe?

Jesus was one who must have thought deeply on life. He saw people all around Him who were bringing upon themselves pain and misery because of their wrong course of action. Then how the harsh noises of quarreling neighbors seeking redress from some minor injury or the loud haggling of buyers and sellers in the market place seeking some advantage for themselves must have cut deeply into His sensitive soul.

Yes, He saw it all—the grime and misery not alone of a village but of a nation and the world as well—and how He must have suffered because of it! How He would have liked to heal all the sick, calm all the restless ones, and purify the hearts of the whole nation, making it a true representative of God.

But this He could not do. Only here and there could He perform a token healing or make a token convert. Completion of the great task of saving the world was far ahead, and though each day He

labored long and earnestly He made no recognizable change in the sea of human misery. He came to earth, went about doing good, and when all was done, what could He see as a result of His travail of soul?

Little do we know what awful feelings of failure must have afflicted Jesus as He approached His final test. We gain some glimpses of this in a few scenes and utterances. One time at the height of His popularity He found the multitude, who only the day before had wanted to hail Him as their king, turning from Him. Of this disheartening scene the Scriptures say, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." John 6:66.

That Jesus was keenly disappointed at this time is seen in the words He then uttered to His disciples, who were standing about Him, "Will you also go away?" Again Jesus revealed this sore feeling of failure in His words to Philip after he had manifested an obtuseness unworthy of a true disciple. What pathos we find in these words: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" John 14:9.

The depth of Jesus' disappointment in His closest friends is expressed in these words spoken to the inner circle of His disciples on the occasion of His last agony in the garden: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Matthew 26:40.

There was one other occasion in the life of Jesus when it is recorded that He wept. Traveling toward Jerusalem one day, He came to the brow of a hill where He saw the city spread out before Him. As He stood there looking over the city that He loved so much, He saw in imagination the crowded streets, the seething market places, the busy Temple courts. He saw a weary people seeking respite from the yoke of the foreign Romans, surcease from the weight of their sins through a round of ceremony, healing for their diseases of body, and peace for their restless souls. As in vision Jesus watched the panorama of misery and woe pass before Him, He could not help crying out in agony of soul and weeping bitter tears. Of this we read:

"And when he was come near he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou had known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that your enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee around, and keep thee in on every side." Luke 19:41-43.

Matthew records Jesus' painful solicitude for His people in these words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killed the prophets, and stoned them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37.

It is in these incidents, scattered through the Gospels, that we get a picture of the sorrows of Jesus. But as we think of whence He came we say to ourselves, "Was it necessary that He thus should suffer?" We were born into this world without our choice; but Jesus, knowing what was before Him, took upon Himself the likeness of men. He shunned nothing in order that He might become a perfect Savior. The Bible says that He was made "perfect through sufferings." Hebrews 2:10. He did not need suffering to perfect Him in holiness, but it must be so to fit Him to be the Savior of mankind.

How wonderful to know that Jesus understands all our sorrows. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Verse 16.