

The Shortest Verse

Dolorous Days

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Today's sermon is titled, "The Shortest Verse."

Jesus' resurrection of Lazarus is one of the most powerful miracles, if not the most powerful, before His own resurrection. It demonstrated without a doubt that He was truly of God, showing His authority over life and death. Lazarus wasn't the first person Christ rose from the dead though. Luke recalls two such miracles. First, we see Him raising the son of a widow, and then later, in the next chapter, He raises Jairus' daughter. However, out of the three times Jesus brought life back to someone who had died, the resurrection of Lazarus is the one most often remembered. Why is this?

Well, on one hand, this was the longest account of the three, and it was the most spectacular. Whereas the widow's son hadn't even been interred yet, and Jairus' daughter wasn't yet several hours dead, Lazarus had been dead for four whole days. It had been so long that not only was he buried in his tomb, but Martha warned Jesus that by now he would have started to smell from the decomposition. There was no plausible deniability about this resurrection. There was no mistake: he was dead, and now he lives. On the other hand, Jesus used this miracle to explain and demonstrate an important aspect of Himself. "I am (the fifth of the I AM statements found in the Gospel of John) the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." An incredibly powerful statement that is immediately substantiated by the raising of Lazarus. It is a moment where the Deity of Christ is plainly shown. It also acts as a needed theological prelude to His own resurrection. Prophets have, in the times of the Old Testament, also risen the dead with God's power. So, just raising the dead, while a powerful witness to His credibility, doesn't by itself prove He's the Son of God. But to claim He Himself is the resurrection, then raise a man from dead, and then, finally, raise Himself from the dead, provides a much stronger, an undeniable even, case. So, maybe that's why it is so famous and well known. It's the longest account and an important moment in the Divine identity of Christ.

As good as that is, I want to suggest something else. Perhaps one more reason we're drawn to this pericope is that not only does it show us Christ's Divine nature, but yea, His Human nature. And in this passage, we see the hypostatic union, the dual nature, of Christ. While Christ, the Son of God, God from God, from whom all things were made and for whom all things were made, used His Divine authority to bring Lazarus back from the dead, Christ, the man, the new Adam, the Son of Man, wept for the death of His beloved friend. It is a beautiful and touching moment where we see clearly that Jesus felt the ebb and flow of true human emotions. He, with His perfect omniscience, knew that Lazarus would die, and had died. He also knew that He would raise him again, and yet, despite knowing these things, He's overcome with grief and sorrow for the loss, even if only temporary, of his friend. Nowhere else in Scripture is there such a moment like this. Let us explore what makes these two words, three in the Greek, so amazing.

To get our bearings, we need to discuss emotions in general. Obviously, we all know that we humans are emotional creatures and can display a wide range of feelings. Anger, sadness, happiness, wrath, sorrow, joy, and countless others. But emotions aren't a trait unique to humans. In fact, the reason we have any capacity for them is because our Creator gave us that ability. We are made in God's image, the *imago Dei* in the Latin. God Himself has emotions and feels them. Even a light reading of Scripture will show this. [Genesis 6:6](#) "And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." God's very heart was *grieved* at the sin of mankind. [Exodus 4:14](#) "Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." God became *angry* at Moses for his initial refusal of God's call. Again in [Exodus 34:6](#) "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." This is God describing Himself to His people. Note the amount of emotions that God claims for Himself: merciful or compassionate, which is being able to feel pity for us; gracious, being able to feel generous and giving; slow to anger, meaning that, yes, there will be a point where He will get angry as He did with Moses; and, of course, the one I think we all know most readily, love. I do not have the time to quote every verse of Scripture that describes God's ability to love, but I hope [John 3:16](#) "'For God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'" suffices and if it doesn't, then I would point you towards the books that have been written about [1 John 4:8](#), "God is love." The Bible readily shows us that God has emotions, but I want to make it clear that they're not the

same as the emotions that we feel. We are fallen creatures in a fallen world. Our capacity for expressing emotions is corrupted like everything else this side of Heaven. God's emotions are pure and unadulterated. They are holy, holy, holy, as He is holy. God is never driven by passions like we are. James points this out when he says "the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

Sometimes we express our emotions in a sinful manner. James continues and warns of such things, teaching that we must "bridle" our tongues lest we start such a great blaze and hurt many with it. But other times, rather than expressing them in a sinful manner, they're expressed in a "broken" manner. That is to say, not how they were designed before the fall. I want to make this distinction clear: just because an emotion has malfunctioned, doesn't necessarily imply an accompanying sin. The entire world is broken from sin, and sometimes things just don't work right. Sicknesses and illnesses didn't exist in the Garden, but I don't suppose it's a sin to get a headache or indigestion. But of course, that doesn't mean every expression of our tampered emotions is okay or without sin. It's a case-by-case kind of thing but isn't too hard to figure out. The corruption of the pure and ordained lust that a husband and wife have for each other in their marriage bed when channeled towards someone you're not married to is a grievous sin. But the fear which, I would contend, originally came from reverence for the Lord, now channeled towards an errant phobia or horror movie, is, while tragic, benign. And so, this leads me to the emotion I want to talk about, and the one you've probably guessed by now: sadness, sorrow, grief.

Before getting to the Incarnation, as mentioned previously, our Holy Text tells us that God has felt "grieved" due to the increasing sin on the earth. [Psalm 78](#) says that He was also grieved in the wilderness wanderings of Israel. Besides God the Father, and as we'll get to, God the Son, the Bible mentions that God the Holy Spirit can be grieved as well. Paul charges us to not grieve the Holy Spirit in [Ephesians 4:30](#). I hope these quotes have proved that God has been shown to feel sadness, but what I want to point out is that nowhere does it state that God ever cried or shed tears. Why? Well, firstly, our transcendent God, being outside time and space (since He created them) doesn't have a physical body with which to cry. Secondly, crying wasn't original to the emotion of sadness. I make this case because in the new Heavens and New Earth, come the Parousia, John tells us in Revelation that there won't be "mourning, *nor crying*, nor pain anymore." This means that crying, sobbing, weeping, is unique to humans who live in a fallen world. It's the human expression of grief. Not a sinful expression, mind you, but

still a maladaptive one. And right therein lies the power of those two words, “Jesus wept.”

Jesus Christ was overcome by grief in that moment, and He wept for the death and loss of His friend. By doing something solely human, He proved Himself to be a real flesh and blood human being - a human being who was subject to the same bodily experience as you and me. If Jesus was unable to feel like we do, to struggle against the same things we do, what good would Him emptying Himself have done? Or would it have even been an “emptying” if He never could walk among us as the least of us? But rather than worrying about an unfamiliar savior, we truly have one that is, as the writer of Hebrews puts it, “able to sympathize with our weakness, and one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

And when this act of human weakness is taken in the midst of the supernatural resurrection of Lazarus and an unimpeachable statement of Deity, you see in tandem the Dual Natures of Christ. Fully God, and Fully Man. While researching I found a quote purported to be by Leo the First, Bishop of Rome in the mid-fifth century A.D (later to be recalled as Pope Leo the Great), “In His humanity Jesus wept for Lazarus; in His divinity he raised him from the dead.” A succinct summary of what I am trying to make clear. However, as much as I like it, I’ve run into the same problem that Dr. Greggo did when looking into that “pithy Good, Better, Best,” quote attributed to Jerome. I’ve found many people saying he said it, but I couldn’t find an actual citation to anything in his corpus. Regardless of original author, the statement is still a well put recap.

Now, I would like to address what life application I would like everyone here to take away today. First, I want everyone to leave here with a greater insight into the Natures of Christ, and especially of His Human Nature. But besides having a better grasp on Christ’s identity, what are we to make of this verse and this sermon? I’ll tell you. If Christ our Lord and God could have His emotions swell up inside of Him to such a point that He wept, then, in no uncertain terms, it is okay for you to cry too. If the Lord of All had a moment (technically two on record, He also wept over Jerusalem in Luke) where the tears flowed from His face, who would dare charge us, who are less than Him, to stand fast? Every single one of us here has been there. Something happens, something big, or even something small, and no matter how much we know it’ll ultimately work out, or how strong our faith in God is, we can’t stop the tears from flowing. We break down and sob. We weep.

The loss of a beloved pet, the passing of a dear friend or family member, or . . . when your Pastor and friend moves back to Washington State. These things happen and they will continue to happen this side of Paradise. Jesus warns that in this world we will have tribulation, and it's unavoidable that, eventually, something will get to us, and cause those dolorous cries to erupt from us again. I intreat you to not find fault with yourselves or anyone else when they're grieving, regardless of what it may be over. Paul in [Romans 12](#) gives us this imperative, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." Everyone will react to woes differently. What brings one person to tears, may not even bother another. But there's not one of us who'll get through this life with a dry eye.

For now, though, be content to cry for the weeping of the night shall soon, one day, be the joy of morn. And once all things are restored, God Himself will wipe away every tear.

Let us pray for all of those crying and weeping today.