

How can mourning be blessed?

I do not have to know you to know that you have suffered and will suffer again, for such is the human condition in a fallen world. I am deeply sorry for the pain you have experienced and any pain that you are currently carrying. Look to the cross with great hope, my brothers and sisters, for Christ has made a way for our times of mourning to be times not just of sorrow but also of great blessing.

In times of mourning we are at a crossroads. We can choose to become bitter and self-occupied with grief, losing hope and faith in the goodness of God, or we can choose to say, “Jesus, I trust in You. I give everything to you. I know that You are with me, even if I cannot see you.” In choosing the second way, we do not run from our grief or try to hide it. We dwell in it for the appropriate time because we need to be honest with ourselves and with God about how we are doing in the present moment. We look to the Cross and see our Savior, whose greatest act of love was brought about by the breaking of His Body. The Cross teaches us that grief opens our hearts to radical compassion. In the words of Henri Nouwen:

“Grief asks me to allow the sins of the world- my own included- to pierce my heart and make me shed tears for them. There is no compassion without many tears. If they can’t be tears that stream from my eyes, they have to be at least tears that well up from my heart. When I consider the immense waywardness of God’s children, our lust, our greed, our violence, our anger, our resentment, and when I look at them through the eyes of God’s heart, I cannot but weep and cry out in grief...”

Grief is the discipline of the heart that sees the sin of the world, and knows itself to be the sorrowful price of freedom without which love cannot bloom. I am beginning to see that much of praying is grieving. This grief is so deep not just because the human sin is so great, but also- and more so- because the divine love is so boundless. To become like the Father whose only authority is compassion, I have to shed countless tears and so prepare my heart to receive anyone, whatever their journey has been, and forgive them from the heart.”¹

When did Jesus mourn?

“And Jesus wept.”²

In John 11, we see Jesus weep at the death of his friend Lazarus. Jesus, who is God, who knows He will raise Lazarus from the dead, who a few verses earlier said this is happening “for the glory of God,”³ pauses and weeps. In this moment, He gives dignity to our suffering. He shows us that grieving is good and necessary, even if we are fully confident that God is with us and working all things for our good. Jesus’ mourning moved His heart to action out of compassion for the sisters of Lazarus; it was from His mourning that He was able to bring forth new life. In our times of mourning may we, like Christ, have great hope that all things are working for God’s glory. When those around us are mourning, may we, like Christ, allow our hearts to be broken open in compassion for them so we can be moved, through Him, to bring life from death and light from darkness.

In Christ,

Aurelia Vaiana, Echo Apprentice

¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* pp.128-129

² John 11:35

³ John 11:4