

Jesus Cries and so do I
 Preaching in the Age of Covid-19
 John 11:1-45
 March 29, 2020
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Jesus wept. His dear friend, Lazarus is now four days in the grave. He is slow to come back to Bethany. Some may say he is slow to show here. The COVID onslaught is just about upon us.

I have been preaching for 32 years, never have I had a moment, standing before a group, when I was more uncertain of what is to come.

But this is what I know: that Jesus is weeping. And so am I.

I find myself wandering through Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' 5 stages of Grief. Do you remember them? Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

Denial: Wow that sounds horrible I'm so glad I don't live in China. Korea: that's really sad, Italy: I know people there, Washington State: that's far away, oh my best friend is there, New York City — it skipped us, flew right over — oh no my family lives there. Still, thank heaven I moved from Chicago where it is really crowded and likely to be bad, good that I moved to Detroit.

Anger. Are you kidding me? Our government has known about this virus for months and what did they do? Don't they understand? What do you mean I'm going to have to tell people not to worship together? That's insane.

Bargaining: If I stay home and get everyone I know to stay home, that will keep us safe?

Depression: Weeks this is going to go on for weeks, oh....no actually months. What's going to be left of the world? What about all of the people living on the edge? What about people who have no way of getting food, no place to shelter safe? What about me—will I get sick? What if my Susan gets sick?

Acceptance: Acceptance, I suppose it would look something like sighing and breathing and settling in for the long haul broken into hourly and daily chunks. But I'm not there I have not accepted the peculiarities of life in the age of COVID -19. I'm still slaloming around backwards and forwards, around and around through the other four gates of grief: anger, bargaining, denial and despair [depression]. I may be a ways away from accepting that this is real. `

Jesus your friend is ill. Don't you want to go see him? Jesus waits a full two days. When he draws near, the news greets him, 'Lazarus your friend, is dead. Four days now, in the

grave.' He continues walking, Martha runs to him, "Lord if you had been here I know that my brother would not have died."

All I know is that Jesus shows, he arrives, he cries, with pity and despair at all of the loss, the wreck and ruin around him. He cries, for what is, and for what is to come. He cries for all of us, with all of us.

He cries as we are in denial, as we are in despair, as we rage at the insanity and bargain with reality.

Jesus cries. Then and now.

He will not let us be in this alone. He will not let death have the final say, the final cry, the final whisper or whimper. He cries. So that we may finally see what is our landscape. There is death in the cave, enough of it so that there is a stench. A stench of loss, love and lies. A stench of death. Jesus cries.

Jesus is here, weeping with us, in denial, depression bargaining and anger, Jesus is with us. Here now. As we hold onto each other in anticipated sadness and loss. Here he is. Jesus is with us as we rage at elected officials who seem not to be able to keep us safe. Jesus is with us. Jesus is with us, shoulder to shoulder no social distance there. As we begin to despair, Jesus is there. Here, now. Jesus Wept. Then and now.

Friends are we giving ourselves time to weep? Weep for what was, weeping for what may not be, weeping for the love of it all. No need now to move on. No need to charge to resolution or acceptance. Jesus wept. He cried and cried and cried, long before he acted, and so I invite you to join him, to join me and to cry. For that is what a faithful person, grounded in reality will do.

Jesus Cries.

We Cry.

We connect. We cry. We do not turn away from what is happening.

Like Jesus at the tomb, like the women at the cross, we will not turn away, but we will cry.

And know, that we are not, nor have we ever been in this alone.

In Christ's Holy name with our tears we pray.

Amen.