



Dealing with death

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept.

John 11:33–35 (NIV)

Reflection

Death is everywhere at the moment and it's safe to assume that most of us are being affected by it. At a collective level we might be feeling overwhelmed by the stories and statistics we're hearing on a daily basis. At a personal level some of us are grieving the loss of loved ones. Added to our grief is perhaps the pain of isolation – the pain of not being present in their final moments or the pain of not being able to mourn together with others.

Maybe some of what we're experiencing is akin to the despair that Jesus' followers most likely felt on Holy Saturday. Unsure of how to reconcile the events of the previous day with their faith in who they thought Jesus was, uncertain of what his death meant for their faith, and facing the unknown in terms of what life after his death would look like for them.

In John 11, Jesus responds in a very human way to the death of a loved one. He hadn't been present when Lazarus died, and as he faced the reality of Lazarus' death he was deeply moved. Jesus wept.

Mourning is an essential part of the grieving process, but practices associated with it are culture-specific and will likely look different for each of us. In the passage quoted from above, for



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example, we learn that people came to Mary and Martha's house to mourn with them. When they saw Mary leave the house, they followed her so they could continue to mourn with her. Implicit in the text is that the accepted practice was to stay and weep with those in mourning.

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of dealing with death in a time of Covid-19 is that the processes of dying and grieving are not occurring as we expect them to. Given current circumstances, we cannot mourn in the way we normally would, so we need to find new and helpful ways of doing so.

Reflection questions

1. How is grief usually expressed in your community?
2. How have you been able to mourn at this time?
3. How can you support friends and neighbours in their mourning and grieving?
4. It can sometimes seem easier to ignore our grief and the process of mourning. We can sometimes try to 'bottle it up' deep inside of us thinking it will just go away. How might you be avoiding grief and pain at the moment? Are there specific things you need to offer to God in prayer as part of the active process of grief and mourning?

Prayer

Loving God, we ask that you would be with us in our grief. Help us to find ways to mourn in spite of our current circumstances. May we know and experience you as the God of all comfort at this time. Amen.