

“No More Tears!”

The beginning of the scene in our Scripture portrays Jesus as acting in a shocking fashion! If we stopped reading the Text with verse 13, then Jesus’ pastoral expertise might well be called into question. For him to respond to a mother’s grief by telling her to not cry, could easily be perceived as extraordinarily insensitive.

Many of us have experienced the death of a loved one or a close friend. In such times, great sorrow is often naturally expressed with tears. During those difficult moments, being told to not cry by anyone, much less a pastoral religious leader, may seem offensive, yet, that is what Jesus did! Why did he tell the widow and grieving mother to not cry?

On the other hand, in verse 14, the Scripture stated, “Then he walked over and touched the coffin, and the men carrying it stopped. Jesus said, ‘Young man! Get up, I tell you!’” When a loved one or close friend died, did you expect Jesus or some other religious figure to raise the deceased person back to life? Why didn’t Jesus raise your friend or loved one from the dead? Some may be tempted to place blame upon you or your loved one or friend for why Jesus did not show the same compassion in your experience, as he did for the widowed, grieving mother in our Reading.

Yet, verse 15 demolishes any negative perception we might have held earlier, as we considered Jesus’ shocking statement, “Don’t cry” to the grieving mother. **Verse 15 revealed, “The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.”** He gave the son “back to his mother”! Jesus not only had compassion for the widowed, grieving mother but he reversed the situation for her. Having been the widow’s only son – her only source of financial support, his death doomed her to eventual poverty! Jesus not only destroyed her reason to mourn but also her reason for despair over her economic prospects. The widow and Jesus saw different futures for her when he told her not to cry. Certainly, following her receiving back her son, her expectations were radically different!

Returning to our own experiences and what the event in today’s Scripture means for you and me, is Jesus telling us to have no more tears? And, if so, why? First, there is nothing inappropriate about you or me grieving when we experience the loss of the mortal life of a loved one or friend. However, because of God’s Agape Love revealed in the Life, Ministry, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus – God’s Son, our grief is not unlimited! Yes, we will be sad because we no longer have our deceased loved one actively involved in our mortal lives but our loss is not permanent. **You and I have reason for hope!** Through Jesus Christ, God showed us, we are Forgiven, Healed of our brokenness, and Invited and Welcomed into an Agape Loving Relationship with our Divine Parent. We are further shown, we, also, will be raised to Eternal Life – the Life in God’s Fulfilled Kingdom – Victorious over Death! **We, then, have reason to join with those, who witnessed the raising of the widow’s son, as explained in verse 16, “They all were filled with fear and**

praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us!’ they said; ‘God has come to save His people!’”

While that is Good News, the full meaning of such a message is much more than what is commonly assumed by our society. Yes, you and I and Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ, is called to share the Good News of how we will inherit the Eternal Life in God’s Fulfilled Kingdom following the conclusion of our earthly lives. Yet, **Jesus Christ also calls us to share God’s Unconditional Invitation with everyone!** All people are invited to join in the New Life in Christ and the New Relationship with our Divine Parent. This invitation comes from God’s Agape – Sacrificial and Suffering Love for us. It is given to us as a Gift – through our undeserved reception of God’s Grace! The Almighty Forgives Us, Heals Us, Welcomes Us, and Transforms Us through the Agape Love of God most clearly shown in Jesus Christ, God’s Son. **But, it is also revealed to many others through us, as we faithfully live out that same agape love in our daily lives.**

Just as each of us has been touched by the death of a loved one or a close friend, so each of us has also experienced the feeling and pain of rejection, exclusion, belittlement, guilt, depression, meaninglessness, and despair. Often, you and I are the source of our own negative emotions about ourselves. **Unfortunately, there are many, who have been dumped on – who have experienced or continue to feel those negative emotions because of the prejudice, hate, anger, greed, lust for power, and self-centeredness of someone else – yes, even from people, who are active in a church – even some, who claim to follow Jesus Christ.**

Our call from Jesus and our Divine Parent is to also share the Good News of God’s Radical Love and Acceptance with those abused and mistreated either by our society or by another individual or group – even a religious group. **Like our Savior Jesus Christ, we are to agape love those hurting folks, as well as, reveal to them God’s Unconditional Agape Love and Extravagant Welcome, so they know and experience Forgiveness, Healing, Hospitality, Wholeness, and Transformation!** Yes, you, I, and Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ, are to demonstrate and explain how Jesus’ affirmation – No More Tears is also for everyone else, especially the hurting and those, who feel rejected and unloved.

Do you trust in God’s Agape Love shown in Jesus Christ? Do you accept the deeper comfort and affirmation of Jesus’ call for us to ultimately have No More Tears? Will you demonstrate your trust and faith by living agape love in your relationships and everyday life – yes even toward those, who you don’t know and who may be hurting because they have suffered rejection and mistreatment? **Let our living the New Life in Christ – agape love and the New Relationship with God – Extravagant and Radical Welcome join with our words of invitation to reveal we are the People Who Ultimately Have No Need for Tears for Jesus Christ and our Divine Parent give us the Eventual Victory over Death, Hate, Selfishness, and Anger! Amen.**