

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
'Why did God cry?'
Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44
October 4, 2026
By Keith Marcy

We read two passages, one from Matthew, the other from Luke, about our Saviour being upset over the future of Jerusalem's people. The two may be the same incident described by different writers, or they may be separate incidents that happened a few months apart. Even if they are separate incidents, they complement each other. Jesus is upset. He is heartbroken. A tear trickles down His cheek? No! His shoulders shake. His face becomes distorted. He cannot speak. His emotions have taken over. Why?

Because He compares Himself to a mother hen whose chicks will not come to her for protection, and she will watch them be destroyed because they thought momma was overprotective.

When Jesus regained His composure He lamented, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, oh how I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."* It is hard to understand the metaphor unless you have seen it happen. A hen with her chicks scratching in the barnyard. They are stirring up and eating tiny seeds and insects. The chicks are carefree. The mother always has her ears tuned for a sign of danger – the tom cat, a dog, a hawk circling overhead. At any hint of danger her tone will change from a relaxed *'beck, beck'* to a sharp unmistakable short ***'beck, beck, beck,'*** and the chicks will run under her wings and be totally sealed from sight. That is the picture Jesus paints with this illustration.

'Jerusalem, you did not believe in me. Even though I did many miracles to prove my identity, you did not believe I am God's Son, the promised Messiah, sent to save those who come to me.'

Why did He weep? Because without Him they are forever lost.

What does He see?

He sees priests parading around in costly robes putting on an air of holiness, but they are fakes. He sees Pharisees imposing all kinds of laws on people while they themselves are disobeying their own laws. He sees teachers of the law making themselves look good, but inside they are full of filth and greed and self-indulgence. He saw hypocrisy of every kind; wickedness was rampant; blind guides, false prophets, blemished sacrifices, insincere worship. That is why He wept. That is why He was overcome with emotion, as if someone close to Him had died – because they were dying spiritually because they had a form of religion, but no Saviour.

Was He weeping for Himself? Was He thinking, *'Look at all I have done for these people, and this conduct is all I get in return?'* No! Not at all.

Here we see the compassion of God. He is always wanting to bless people – to save them for eternity. When they refuse the offer – His offer – He weeps for them because they are losing – they have rejected their Messiah – their Saviour. He wept for them.

In less than a week He would go to the cross – willingly. He said, *"I lay down my life of my own accord. I have the power to lay it down and take it up again. I received this from My Father in Heaven."* And yet He knew that many of those who shouted and welcomed His triumphant entry on Palm Sunday would be shouting, *"Crucify. Crucify,"* when Pilate asked, *"I find no fault in Him; shall I release him?"*

A short time ago we looked at the miracle when Jesus healed a man who was blind from birth. The religious leaders did not believe the man's story. *"Jesus put mud on my eyes. I washed and I could see."*

"Nonsense," they replied and they turfed him out. Now, Jesus is close to the end of His earthly ministry. He weeps. He wails because the people refuse to believe Him.

Does God weep for our community?

Our country?

Yet there is hope. The Holy Spirit is still working; still convicting people of sin; still pleading Jesus' words, *"Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and laden down in sin, and I will give you rest!"*

My mother-in-law grew up in Saskatchewan during the drought of the 1930's. She talked about dust storms so bad, day became like night. And fires!

There is a story about a couple who homesteaded on the prairies. One day they saw smoke on the horizon. Within minutes the fire was coming at them. They quickly took refuge in a dry cistern. When they came out, everything was gone – their crops, barn, even their sod house was so scorched it fell apart. The husband walked across the yard and in disgust kicked a clump of smoldering sod. It was a hen, scorched beyond recognition. To his utter amazement, under the hen were 12 live chicks, protected from the heat and flames because they obeyed their mother's warning and hid beneath her wings. For the farmer, when all else was gone, he saw the seed of a new beginning.

We can have that new beginning too, by heeding the warning of a God of love – *"Come unto me..."*