

McCabe United Methodist Church
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Poured Out: Elements of a Resurrection – Tears
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Jesus set in motion a series of events that would change the world. His notoriety had spread in three years of teaching, performing miracles, and flying in the face of established authority when he felt people were suffering. He was beloved by many, but misunderstood, hated and feared by some and some who were in power. As we entered the Lenten Season you have heard about the tangible elements of blood, oil, wine, and water poured out to give us a glimpse into the drama of Holy Week. I will share with you the element of tears of sorrow, lament and eventual joy.

David prays to God...Psalms 56:8....Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle...are they not in thy book?

“Put my tears into thy bottle; the tears which I shed in my wanderings. Let them be remembered by thee as if they were gathered up and placed in a bottle.”

As I have researched the tears in the Bible, (yes, I have used the Internet as well as a good ole book called WHERE TO FIND IT IN THE BIBLE) I have found many references. In fact, one source indicated 677 references/verses for “tears “in the Scriptures. They were tears of repentance, grief, sin and sorrow. Weeping was more frequently associated with mental distress rather than physical pain. Eastern peoples show none of the restraint of emotion in lamentation characteristic of modern Occidentals and many records of this manifestation of woe even among men accustomed to hardship and warfare ...i.e. David and his soldiers shed a flow of tears ..Evidence of sorrow in prospect of approaching death. PSLAMS 39:12 ...”Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears”.

It is not wrong to weep; David wept; Nature prompts us to weep and it cannot be wrong. To weep is our eye “poured out”. Its tears unto God. Job 16: 20...”my friends scorn me; my eye pours out tears to God.” Jesus wept: Luke 19: 41...”and when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!”

In ancient times a bottle was probably made of skin or a terra cotta vessel and called a “lachrymatory”. The custom was to collect the tears shed during a time of calamity and sorrow and preserving them in the small lachrymatory as a

memorial of the grief. The Romans began the custom, that in a time of mourning on a funeral occasion a friend went to one in sorrow and wiped away the tears from the eyes with a piece of cloth and squeezed the tears into a small bottle of skin or terra cotta, which was carefully preserved as a memorial of friendship and respect. Sometimes women were even paid to cry into vessels as they walked along the mourning procession; those crying the loudest and producing the most tears received the most compensation.

To this day many lachrymatories can be found in ancient Roman tombs.

Salt was used in the ancient world for preservation and healing and thus became an element in rituals of covenant-making and healing as well. The salty tears cried by those closest to Jesus are part of the connection we all have to loving deeply. Pain and despair can seem to overwhelm in the face of tragedy. But because we believe that Christ's resurrection is also our own, we also know that tears of joy are not far behind. As God makes all things new, lament can turn to praise and tears can turn to dancing.

And with all the 677 references to tears in the Scriptures it seems only appropriate to mention Revelations 7: 17..."For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes". And Revelations 21: 4..."He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." Explore as I did the many verses of lamentations, sorrow, tears poured out from the prophets and others in the Old Testament and by those in the New Testament for the Crucifixion of our Savior Jesus Christ and then the saving grace for our souls.

Please join us next Wednesday to learn more about the elements that were poured out for us....the element of light. On Maundy Thursday, March 28, join us for a reenactment of the Last Supper and then on Good Friday, March 29, come and experience the elements of BLOOD, OIL, WINE, WATER, TEARS AND LIGHT as told by those who were there.