

First Baptist Pulpit

Jesus The Savior, Stirred and Troubled

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.
(John 11:33-35)

A Sermon

Delivered by

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Stirred and troubled--every human soul knows what it means and how it feels to be stirred and troubled, especially in times of toil and trial, pain and sorrow, fear and anger, disappointment and adversity, sickness and even death--when we are stirred in our spirits, and troubled in our souls. When we are stirred and troubled, our emotions swell deep within us and rise like a troubled sea tossed by fierce wind and furious wave, breaking violently upon the battered shorelines of our hearts and minds. Certainly, the storm-tossed soul of the sinner knows what it means to be stirred and troubled, for "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Always in a tumult, the sinful soul howls with dark and boisterous winds of iniquity, and stirs with deep and dangerous waters of death. Even the righteous soul is often stirred and troubled; we "who see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep" are not immune to hurricanes of the heart and tsunamis of the soul. We may know that our Captain commands and raises the stormy wind and wave, and ordains the boundaries of the sea by a perpetual decree so that its fierce winds and roaring waves cannot prevail and pass over our heads; yet when the storm rises and the waves mount up to heaven and go down to the depths, our soul "is melted because of trouble" and we "reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at our wit's end." How often are we like James' double minded man, unstable in all our ways, our faith wavering "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." Even when the righteous are wise enough, graced enough, to obey our Master's voice--"Peace, be still"--we are always and again like Jacob's firstborn, "unstable as water."³ Just beneath the calm sway of His voice, the soul too often stirs uneasily with trouble. We can feel the soul's troubled stirring, we can sense its uneasy swirling around our heart, or discern its sudden surge to rage and rise unexpectedly through our bosoms and into our throats; bristling in the capillaries of our head; flooding our tear glands; contorting our faces with grief and anxiety; causing our voices to choke, tremble and break; and our bodies to shake with the force of overwhelming emotions stirred and troubled.

Almost to our disbelief, our Savior too was stirred and troubled, stirred in the fathomless regions of His human soul, and troubled in the immeasurable depths of His Divine Spirit. When Jesus arrived at Bethany and saw the weeping Mary, "and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled."⁴ John chooses the words *enebrimesato*⁵ and *etaragzen*⁶ to characterize the groaning and troubled Christ and Savior. To describe the Savior's groaning, John uses *enebrimesato*, which expresses intense agitation of the emotions, like a churning ocean, as when the soul is deeply and powerfully moved on the inside by what it sees or experiences on the outside. From *enebrimesato* we derive our English word "brim," which denotes the rising of some liquid to the edge of that which holds it, whether aromatic tea brimming to the lip of a delicate China cup, or raging waves brimming to the measureless shoreline of a mighty ocean. The deep waters of Jesus' stirred and troubled soul brimmed when he saw the mourners weeping over his dead friend Lazarus. John also says the Savior was "troubled," translated from the Greek term *etaragzen*, which denotes an unsettling turbulence resulting in mental or spiritual agitation, especially in the context of great distress accompanied with fear; from *etaragzen* we derive our English word "terror," often the byproduct of the stirred and troubled soul. In this sense, Jesus's "was troubled" at Bethany, not with terror as mere mortals, but troubled at the sight of human distress and fear in the face of sickness, sorrow, and death.

Indeed, that day at Bethany, the soul of Jesus brimmed; His spirit groaned, stirred, and troubled itself at the pitiful sight of the human condition. What stirred Him so powerfully, what troubled Him so deeply that the unfathomable waters of His Divine spirit brimmed upon the delicate but infinite shoreline of His compassionate humanity? Was it the sincere demonstrations of empathetic grief which the fellow mourners expressed to their beloved friends Mary and Martha? Was it Martha's and Mary's earnest but naive faith which said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died"?⁷ Was it the sight of Mary running out to meet Him and falling at His feet in sorrow and adoration? Indeed, it was all these things, but most of all, it was their tears, their bitter, salty tears, rising up like sea spray from the turbulent waters of their stirred and troubled souls. As John tells us, "When Jesus therefore saw [Mary] weeping, and the Jews also which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled."⁸

What solace this is to human souls stirred and troubled! The Savior will always meet us at Bethany, at the place of our deepest sorrows and woes. The waves of trouble may rise and fall hard upon us, and the billows of sorrow may roll within, but "deep calleth unto deep" at the noise of our waterspouts, and the Savior's mercy and love, like a mighty ocean, rise up to meet us, His soul troubled by our troubles, His spirit stirred by our sorrows; He is a merciful and faithful high priest, touched with the feelings of our infirmities, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. If our babies are sick, He meets us in the manger; if we are weary in the way, He meets us at Jacob's well and gives us living water to replenish our tired souls; if life beats us up and leaves us for dead on the road to Jericho, He is the Good Samaritan who pours heaven's wine in our wounds, binds up our broken places, and secures for us safe lodging from the dark night. If we lay sick and impotent at Bethesda's pool, only His angel can stir the waters of healing. If we are naked and destitute, He will clothe us as the lily and feed us as surely as He feeds the sparrow. If we follow our loved ones to the tomb, His steady hand is upon the bier. What can mournful Martha do but meet the Savior on the outskirts of Bethany, the city of death and sorrow? Where can weeping Mary fall but at His feet? "Behold, how he loved him!" the mourners exclaimed as Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb. "Behold, how he loves us!" We must exclaim. Our Savior, troubled and stirred, meets us at every station and turn of our lives, even in the places of our deepest despair. Like Mary and Martha who said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, "we may think that He is late, but He never is; He is always exactly on God's time for God's own purpose.

Stirred and troubled as Jesus was at the sight of the mourners, Martha, and Mary; high as the deep waters of His love arose at the sight of their weeping; His emotions never brimmed over the edge until He inquired after His beloved Lazarus: "Where have ye laid him?" Jesus asked. "Come and see," said the sisters and their faithful friends. Then, John tells us; then, the salty ocean brimmed over the brink; then "Jesus wept."

For whom did Jesus weep, and why? For whom? Jesus wept for Lazarus, whose very name means "without help." Jesus wept for the helpless one who lay lifeless under sin's curse, the breathless one fallen under death's sway, behind the cold, heavy stone of finality, and within the dark chambers of irreversible circumstances. Jesus wept for the helpless one wrapped in graveclothes, bound hand and foot. Humanity's most desperate condition, this is where Jesus wept; humanity's universal and ultimate destiny, the grave--this is the place of God's soul rising like the stirred and troubled ocean; God's love, like the crystal sea before His throne, stirs with troubled waters swirling and brimming; here, at death's cave, is the only place God's tears have ever fallen. And why does God thus weep at Lazarus' tomb? The mourners' sorrowful voices tell us, "Behold, how he loved him. Behold, how he loved him." These words yet reverberate among the living. The living saint, no matter how dark his circumstances, can take heart at the mourner's words, "Behold, how he loved him": yea, "Behold, how he loves thee," Dear Christian friend. "Are you helpless, like Lazarus?" Jesus, the stirred and troubled Savior, groans at thy side. Are you in mournful circumstances and dreadful straits out of which there seems no deliverance? "Roll the stone," says the weeping Savior, "Loose him and let him go!" And what of those souls unsaved, those spirits imprisoned in tombs of depravity, wrapped in the graveclothes of iniquity, bound hand and foot by sin, who never have heard the Savior's voice or sensed the powerful stirring of His troubled heart. Sinners too should heed the mourners' voices, "Behold, how he loved him!" "Behold, how the Savior loves the dead and dying sinner!" Hell, the lake of fire, stirs up the dead and opens her dark mouth to meet the sinner at his demise; but the river of life also stirs and flows at the grave of sin and death. The weeping Savior, His voice like the sound of many waters roars, "Lazarus, come forth!" "Come forth," helpless one. "Come forth," you who dwell under the curse of sin in the catacombs of hell. "Come forth," you who are bound in the graveclothes of death. "Come forth" in obedience to that stirred and troubled sovereign who calls those things that be not as though they were, even to the raising of the dead. "Come forth" though "bound hand and foot"; "Come forth" to that weeping Savior who alone can decree, "Loose him and let him go." "Loose him and let him go" from the bonds of iniquity and graveclothes of sin. "Come forth" weeping saint and dying sinner, "Come forth." "Come forth" to the Savior whose troubled soul stirs for thee.

Soli deo gloria

1. Isaiah 57:20
2. Ps. 107:24-26; Jer. 5:22

3. James 1:6
4. Genesis 49:4
5. John 11:33
6. enebrimhsato
7. etaraxe
8. John 11:21, 32
9. John 11:33