

John 11:35

Message #3 (10:15) in the series "Whose Verse is it Anyway"?

Dominic Tuttle

Good morning, everyone if you haven't had a chance to meet my name is Dominic Tuttle. I'm the director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries here at St Paul's Church and I have the joy and privilege of sharing God's word with you today. The verse that I will be preaching from is John. Chapter 11, verse 35. "Jesus wept." Pray with me, will you, please?

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for your word. How even through just the simplest of verses, you can speak so much into our lives. I pray that you would open our hearts and our minds, our eyes and our ears to see and hear what you would teach us. Lord, open your word to us in a new way, even with a verse that we might be familiar with, help us gain a new perspective on life and how we might live. We thank you. We praise you, Lord, in your name. Amen.

So, I'd like to begin with a little bit of an explanation on the context of the Book of John. Now, I know as a someone in pastoral care, really, I shouldn't have a favorite verse or a favorite chapter or a favorite book of the Bible but I'm going to go ahead and say I have a favorite gospel. I love the Book of John. Each of the Gospels were written with an intention to communicate something to make a point. The Gospel of Matthew was written for a Jewish audience. That's why it starts out with the lineage, because that's important to the Jewish audience. Everything that Matthew works through in his gospel is for that Hebrew mindset. There are even really complex methods of teaching something called a Chiastic teaching structure where you make two points at the same time and where they intersect is your main point. It's very complicated. I had to have someone draw it on a whiteboard for me when I learned about it. The Gospel of Mark was written for a Roman audience. It's very snappy. If you don't have much patience or a long attention span. The Gospel of Mark is for you. Immediately this and then this happened immediately. This happened very dynamic. The Book of Luke was written for a Greek audience by a doctor. It's very logical. It's very methodical. You're getting tons of references of who is in charge here and exterior things that we can look into surrounding records to line up and realize now this this guy knew what he was talking about. They're called the Synoptic Gospels. They all have shared a similar synopsis. And then there's the Gospel of John. John said, okay, you do your thing. I got a different fish to fry. John wanted to communicate to his readers whoever they were, and right now that's us, that Jesus was God. The Divinity of Christ. So, at the very beginning of his gospel in John chapter one, he says, In the beginning was the word, and the word was God. Right from the get-go out the gate, John wants to make it clear this is what I'm talking about. Jesus is the word of God. He is God. And now I'm going to tell you about how he was absolutely a human here on Earth while being God, fully God and fully man. Not a popular concept at the time, because first of all, I mean, God can't have a son. He's not human like us. That's a little weird. That's blasphemy. A little heretical. So, ease up on that. It would not have been popular. And there were lots of other theological schools of thought that argued and said, no, you're wrong. Absolutely. 100% wrong. Jesus could not be the son of God because there is no son. We are all children of God in the adoptive sense. But you have to know, John said, I'm going to have to correct you here. So, we get into the Gospel of John, and the Gospel of John is very emotional. It's very personal. Because if you're trying to recognize the humanity of someone, you need to be able to relate. You've got to connect with them. So, when we get to John, chapter 11, you have this amazing story of Jesus and some of his friends. Now, it doesn't tell us that his buddy Lazarus was a follower. It doesn't tell us that Lazarus says sisters Mary and Martha were followers. Because they're already in a place, they're stationary, but they know Jesus and Jesus knows them. In fact, at the beginning of Chapter 11, a man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was sick. You've also might have heard the reference to Mary and Martha Jesus comes to teach. And Martha is, you know, preparing meals, hosting, just being a good host, which is very important to their society. You have to offer good hospitality. Martha is on the ball and Mary is

just hanging out listening to Jesus, not doing anything. A little stressful. Little stressful. All of us have those moments where at one moment we see what's important and we're Martha. And at other times, we feel like this is more important and we're Mary. And neither one is wrong. And that's a whole other lesson we could get into. But by this point, Jesus knows these people. He's been friends with them. He has spent time and life with them. Her brother Lazarus was sick. In verse three, it says So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus, telling him, Lord, your dear friend is very sick. No one wants to get that message. No one wanted that message back then. No one wants that message now. When Jesus heard about it, he said, Lazarus sickness will not end in death. So, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this. Jesus is laying it out there for His disciples. But then verse five, we get that confusing thing. Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus. He stayed where he was for the next two days. Finally, he said to his disciples, Let's go back to Judea. This is where Bethany is, just outside of Jerusalem. So he's had the message and he doesn't do anything. He just waits and he says, God's got a plan. Isn't that just the most comforting thing to hear when you're facing down bad news? God's got a plan. Great. What is it? Someone. Anyone? Tell me. I need a way to handle this bad news. Jesus does not provide that in the moment. He just waits and says, okay, now we'll go. But his disciples objected. I love how often the disciples had no problem or fear stepping up to Jesus and saying, Whoa, maybe not. Let's not do that. And you know the disciples. Maybe it's because they didn't come from the usual background of a disciple being well trained in school and such. These are all working class and general just rejects. They had no problem saying to the rabbi, you're wrong, we can't do that. A really good disciple raised in the rabbinical traditions, would have said, whatever you say, I'm following you because you're raised to do that. These guys were not. So once again, we can relate to because I would have some issues. They say, Rabbi, only a few days ago, the people in Judea were trying to stone you to death. That if you're sure that means throw heavy rocks at you until you stop moving. Cause for concern! They say, 'Are you going there again?' Jesus replied there are 12 hours of daylight every day. During the day, people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. But at night there is a danger of stumbling because they have no lights. Now, that seems a little out of context, and the disciples have no idea what he's talking about. At this point, we don't have any idea what he's talking about. Thankfully, this is Jesus, and he always gives us an answer eventually. But then he says, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up. The disciples said, Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better. They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. So, He told them plainly, It's like he's having to spell everything out. People keep telling Jesus things. And in turn Jesus is having to turn around and correct them. He says, Lazarus is dead, and for your sakes, imagine being the disciple and hearing this, for your sakes. I'm glad I wasn't there for now; you will really believe. Come, let's go and see him. Why? He's already dead. There's some serious confusion on everyone's part here. But people keep telling Jesus what's going on, and Jesus keeps trying to explain the reality they can't see. Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, Let's go to and die with Jesus. They're like, Great. All right, here we go. It's been fun, guys, but we're all going to die. Their merry bunch, huh? Obviously, this is not good news for Jesus. He's not happy about this, but he can see beyond the immediate reality. They arrived in Bethany, and we're told that Lazarus had already been dead in the grave for four days. Four days. That's four days of adjusting to this reality that your brother is gone. Four days of grieving. Four days of mourning. Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. It's emotional. It's hard. You don't want to do anything. And at the moment, it seems like Jesus was just taking his sweet time. So, what's going on here? Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if only you would have been here, my brother would not have died. She knows who Jesus is and what He can do. I would imagine she would be resentful, upset, hurt that the one person that she knows could have saved her brother, didn't. Was late somehow. But, she says, but even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask. That's her readjustment. She's hurt. She's upset. She's sad. She's mourning, but she's still resetting herself to know who Jesus is. And Jesus tells her she's told him something, and now he's got to correct her, your brother will rise again. He's now stating reality. She doesn't hear that. So she tells him what she sees. Yes, Martha said he will rise when everyone else rises at the last day. And that's this is scriptural. Everyone will rise. The last day she's telling the truth. And Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live even

after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never, ever die. That's verse 26. Do you believe this, Martha? Now he's issuing a challenge. He's told her the reality beyond what she sees. And he's asking her to trust him. And she says, Yes, Lord, she told him, I've always believed you're the Messiah, the son of God, the one who has come into the world from God. And here's how she puts that into action. Verse 28, *"She returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her The teacher is here and wants to see you. So Mary immediately went to see him. Jesus had stayed outside the village at the place where Martha met him. When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus his grave to weep. So they followed her there."*

I want to pause on this, in their culture they had something that we don't. Nowadays for many of us, if we're mourning, people want to give us space. It's uncomfortable. You don't want to crowd in on them or bother them while they're grieving. Just give them time. Give them space. Not everyone thinks that's the best plan. Back in this time, in this culture, there were professional mourners. Professional! Who here feels like they could be a professional mourner? Like, you're like, you know what? I got this. You need someone to weep and wail loudly. Send me in. I would feel really awkward and uncomfortable about that. There were people who would literally come along, usually the people who just lost someone wouldn't pay. It would be the surrounding family and friends would kind of chip in and basically give them food and drink while they were there. But not a bad gig. You show up, someone gives you a meal, something to drink, and then you just go and every time the closest family members are grieving, you go along and you just start making all the noise you can. (Dominic cries loudly) Sorry, I tried to back away from the mic, but it's attached to my face. You wail and in doing so, you give the person mourning the environment to grieve. They're not trying to hide it and hold it in and be brave. There's room to mourn. There's space for that, to grieve and say goodbye. So while I find it a little ridiculous from my perspective, in my context, I can see the value in this, that Mary and Martha have people there to establish that time and place to properly grieve. Don't worry, I won't wail again into the microphone. Scared me. Mary arrived and saw Jesus and fell at his feet. This is a verse 32. "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died." I think Mary and Martha had discussed this because they just said the same thing to Jesus individually at separate times. Yeah. If Jesus would have been here, he could have saved Lazarus. That is raw emotion. They're not holding it back. They're telling Jesus how they feel. And that's good. But once again, someone is telling Jesus something, and he has to correct and show the reality. When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, deep anger welled up within him and he was deeply troubled. Okay. Our verse is Jesus wept. Our verse is not Jesus got angry and I love it. Jesus got angry. A deep anger welled up within him. This is wrong. This is not how things are supposed to be. God did not design us for death. He designed us for life and life eternal. This is wrong. And in this moment, Jesus. Fully human. And fully God who sees beyond time. Recognizes that death is wrong, and he is going to put an end to it. And he is angry at it. Verse 34. "Where have you put him? He asked them." I almost expected Jesus to have snapped at. He's angry. He's troubled. Where have you put him? You imagine we picture Jesus is like the really sad Jesus in the garden who's like, Oh, which to be fair, you're preparing to die, you know? But all the paintings just have him looking mildly constipated. Classical art. I have some questions about their interpretation of Jesus. You never see Jesus laughing. He's got a group of disciples who we believe probably would have been between the ages of 11 or 12 and 18 or 19. He's got a youth group. And you're telling me Jesus with a youth group, doesn't have boys wrestling and arguing and telling jokes and laughing and teasing. I see this all the time in my youth group. Less of the wrestling. Thankfully, we don't have too much of that. Jesus here is dealing with real people. And we have to remember that he's a real person. And so, he comes into the moment angry. Where have you put him? They told him, Lord, come and see. And then 'Jesus wept.'

You know that feeling when you're so angry, so frustrated. You cry because you don't know what to do. Jesus wept. He'd lost his friend. Everyone was telling him what was going on, and no one could see what was really going on. And no one was listening to him as he was trying to explain to them what was going on. It's so frustrating.

When I was a kid, most of my memories are very happy. Well, that's nice until I got to be probably around 18 or 19 years old, and I realized the reason most of my childhood memories were happy was because I didn't feel like I was allowed to be sad. If I was upset, I was bothering people. If I was angry, I was a nuisance. And so, I just take all of those, throw them out and just be happy. Everyone knew me as the happy, cheerful, always positive guy because I was. And then one day I was hanging out with some friends and this one girl put on really, really like angry music, yelling and screaming and loud guitars and drums, and you can't understand what anyone is saying, and I was like, not for me, it's not really my cup of tea with music. And so, you know, she's listening to it and a few people are like getting into it. Those who knew what it was, I still couldn't tell you who or what it was. I didn't get it. And so, after my night, it was like, I don't understand. I don't understand this music. I'm not connecting to it. Why do you like it? Help me. I don't know what's going on here. Walk me through this. Why do you enjoy listening to this? Because this is just hurting my ears. Apparently, I was already an old man, and my friend looked at me and she said, haven't you ever been angry? It's angry. I mean, a few times been mad at my brother. You know, we're brothers, but a little bit. And she's like. I mean, if this is angry music, if you've not been really angry, then yeah, you might not connect to it. She said, I've been angry a lot and some of my other friends are like, oh yeah, I've done this one time. I was like, I didn't understand. And so, we all end up going off. We'd met up for lunch and everyone's gone off in different directions. And I was sitting in my car. I was thinking, have I been angry? Is there anything that I'm upset about? And I started thinking. What could I be angry about? Because if I haven't been angry about something, I'm probably missing something. And suddenly. All of a sudden, it just popped into my head. My maternal grandmother died of cancer when I was two or three months old. I have no memory of her. I have a photo of her holding me and she was looking really old and frail. I'd never known her. I'd never had an emotional attachment to this woman. My dad and my uncle, my aunt would talk about her from time to time. But I didn't know this person. It was just a story. But that picture popped into my head of Grandma Joyce holding me. And I started to get angry. I was mad that I never got to meet my grandma. And I sat in my car and yelled and screamed and hammered on the steering wheel. I was just so mad. And then I started to get angry about something my dad had said. And then I started to get angry about someone who'd been rude to me at college. And then I started. I was mad for a week. An entire week. I was just angry at everything. And everyone stayed away from me because no one knew how to handle Dominic like this. I scared all of my friends. I had people coming up to me saying, hey, are you okay? Meaning very well. And I said, Yeah, I feel great. I've given my self-permission to be angry. And they're like, okay, just checking and then walk away. And about after a week of just being angry, I woke up angry. I was angry in the car. It just kept welling up, this wellspring of anger. After about a week, it subsided. And I felt alive. I wasn't faking. I wasn't putting on a happy face all the time. I felt like I had just gone on a huge emotional journey in a week. And I started letting myself be angry. And I cried and I yelled at God, and I was just angry. And I wept a lot.

See, Jesus is in this situation where He keeps telling people the reality and they keep saying, No, no, it's like this. That's frustrating in any situation. But now he's lost a friend. And so, he wept. He was angry. He was frustrated. I get it. When you're going through emotions, you need to feel them. God built us to be emotional creatures. We have feelings for a reason. But Jesus also asks us to look beyond our feelings. Feelings aren't everything, but we can't bottle them up and shove them down and ignore them. Or eventually you're going to have a weak strait full of emotion if you're like me. Imagine if I never cried. And then I also had a week where I just cried all the time. That would be rough for everyone.

Jesus was still angry when he arrived at the tomb. This is verse 38. 'A cave with a stone rolled across its entrance.' (Anyone find that familiar cave to tomb, stone rolled cross interests picking up on something there?) Roll the stone aside. Jesus, he's still angry. He is upset. Get it out of the way. But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested. Lord, he's been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible. I'm not going to lie. I love the King James version of this because it translates, he has been dead these four days. 'He stinketh.' Nice. Once again, people are telling Jesus what they see, what they know. And Jesus is like you guys for the last time. Now he doesn't say that. Jesus responded, Didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe? So, they're like, Wow, here we go. Roll the stone aside. All the professional mourners are like, how

dare he? Doesn't he know how much effort we've put in here grieving with these people? (I tried to reign in the wailing.) They rolled the stone aside and Jesus looked up to heaven and prays the best 'I told you so prayer' in existence in the Bible. 'Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me. But I said it out loud. For the sake of all these people standing here so that they would believe you sent me. God, I know you hear me. And I know that you now that I know that you hear me, but no one else seems to get it.' That's a good prayer. I need to work that one on to my kids somehow. God, I know you hear me, and I know that, but for my children's sake, let them eat their vegetables. Now, actually, they're getting really good eating vegetables, to be fair, I'm really proud of that. Sidetrack. Jesus shouted. This is the final statement of this story. Jesus shouted, 'Lazarus, come out. I've had enough. And the dead man came out. His hands and feet bowed in grave clothes. His face wrapped in a head cloth. Jesus told them, 'Unwrap him and let him go.' Boom! This is what Jesus has seen. Jesus knows this is the truth. And everyone just keeps telling him, no, no, don't do that. Oh, no, no, Jesus, don't do that. Is he the son of God or is he not the son of God? Who's in charge here?

Ok, to be fair, everyone has their own free will. But seriously, if anyone's going to tell you to do something, it should be Jesus and you should listen. At least that's my perspective as a youth pastor 2,000 years later. Very different culture, different time. But you see what Jesus is going through. This is an emotional God. And you have feelings that were given to you by an emotional God. You think no one understands you? Jesus is here, gritting his teeth, weeping with frustration. I can relate to that. Jesus knows what you're going through. No one here can say no one understands me. Jesus knows better than you could ever imagine. We are created to feel. But we're called to see beyond emotion. That doesn't mean we get rid of it and ignore it like I did for so long. You see beyond it. I know it feels in moments when you're confused and scared that you're stuck there forever.

Last week, Pastor David preached on Psalm 23, and we are guided through the valley of the shadow of death by our shepherd. Nothing lasts forever. It's the one guarantee we have in this life. Everything's going to change except for God. Your bad situation is going to change. God is the only constant we have in this life. And thank God! We don't have to bottle it up. You don't have to put on a brave face and pretend you are this stoic, unfeeling, good Christian who never struggles. You are allowed to be afraid. You are allowed to doubt. You are allowed to be sad. You are allowed to be angry. All these emotions that are so often seen as negative in our society, you're allowed. God gave you those emotions to deal with the world you're going through. Experience them. Don't hide from them. Don't run away. Take the time to sit in that emotion. Take the time to walk through that valley. Because our shepherd is with us, and Jesus can see beyond the weeping. He can see what's next. He can see what's after. Sometimes it's a phenomenal miracle that you would never expect. And sometimes it's just a different perspective on life that he's going to ask you to share with someone else who's going through that later.

As we head out today, our challenge is to not flee from our emotions, but to embrace them and recognize them for what they are. A way of interacting with the world, connecting to the world. But they don't control the world and they don't control us. Like Jesus said to Martha in verse 40. *'Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?'* Believe that things are going to change. That things can get better. If you're struggling with something and you don't know how to work through the emotions yourself, please reach out. You can reach out any to any one of the pastors, anyone on staff here. We will find a way to get you help if you need it. We'll help you if we can. And if not, there is someone in this church who can help if you don't know how to get through it, there are ways, and you are not alone. We are a family. We are a community. And we all worship a loving, feeling, emotional God. Pray with me now

Heavenly Father, again, I thank you for your word, and I think you how much you speak to us through these stories, how we don't have to run and hide, how we don't have to pretend that everything's okay, that we can take time to just feel. But also, that you give us hope. Hope of life. Hope of more than just emotion that you give us life and life to the fullest. We thank you and we praise you, Lord, in your name. Amen.