

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
St. John's, NL  
"Tears That Tear...or Bind"  
Dr. J. Dent

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All Saint's Day

Everyone one of us have had significant times of crying. We have shed tears over lost loved ones. We have shed tears during times of significant pain. Our hearts have been torn in one way or another, and we have cried. Now I should mention that for some of us that we may have to go back to childhood to remember the last time we have truly bawled. For others of us we don't have to remember back very far to recall the tears, maybe even bawling in the bulk barn, if so needed.

For me personally, I cry perhaps more than most men. This means I don't cry very much. I feel others' pain and that brings me in touch with my own, at least a little bit. I remember being in an Al-anon meeting and holding back the tears for all the pain of those who suffered their whole lives because of someone else's drinking. I remember saying as a child, "It's not fair." What happens in our lives is indeed often not fair, certainly if fairness is about what I deserve or think I deserve.

Whether you cry a lot or a little, there are many articles that you can read on the therapeutic value of weeping. Here's one at random from the internet entitled "Fears about tears? Why crying is good for you" *Vibrant Life*, Nov-Dec, 1992 by Victor Parachin ([http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0826/is\\_n6\\_v8/ai\\_12930434/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0826/is_n6_v8/ai_12930434/)): Here's how experts answer some of the most common questions about crying.

1. Why do people often feel better after crying? Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D., and a professor at the University of Colorado Medical School, works primarily with people who are mourning the death of a loved one. "In my clinical experience with thousands of mourners, I have observed changes in physical [appearance] following the expression of tears....Not only do people feel better after crying; they also look better."

And according to Dr. William Frey, a biochemist and director of the Dry Eye and Tear Research Center in Minneapolis, the reason people feel better after crying "is that they may be removing, in their tears, chemicals that build up during emotional stress." His research indicates that tears, along

with perspiration, urine, and the air we exhale, rid the body of various toxins and other wastes.

As far back as 1957 it was discovered that emotional tears are chemically different from tears that result because of an eye irritation. Emotional tears contain more protein and beta-endorphin, one of the body's natural pain relievers.

Margaret Crepeau, Ph.D., and professor of nursing at Marquette University, has studied the subject of tears from both physical and emotional angles. She claims that healthy people view tears positively, while people plagued with various illnesses see them as unnecessary and even humiliating. Dr. Crepeau states: "I found that well men and women cried more tears more often and at more times than did men and women with ulcers and colitis."

Consequently, in the school of nursing at Marquette University nurses as well as those in training are urged not to automatically provide tranquilizers to weeping patients, but to allow the tears to do their own therapeutic work. Dr. Crepeau states "Laughter and tears are two inherent natural medicines whereby we can reduce duress, let out negative feelings, and recharge. They truly are the body's own best resources."

2. Why do women cry more than men? Is it true that women cry more often than men? Dr. Frey and his colleagues worked with 331 volunteers, aged 18 to 75, asking them to keep a "tear diary" for 30 days. Women reported crying four or five times more than men during this period. The reason has more to do with body chemistry than cultural conditioning, states Dr. Frey.

He notes that women have serum prolactin levels much higher than men. Prolactin is a hormone connected with the production of tears as well as breast milk. "Hormones may help regulate tear production and have something to do with crying frequency."

Interestingly, studies show that there is no difference in crying patterns between boys and girls up to the age of puberty. "Then, between the ages of 12 and 18," says Dr. Frey, "women develop 60 percent higher levels of prolactin than men, and they start crying nearly four times more often."

3. How often do people cry and why? People shed tears far more often than is realized. According to Dr. Frey and the "tear diaries," the following appears to occur:

- \* Sadness accounts for 49 percent of tears;
- \* Happiness for 21 percent;
- \* Anger for 10 percent;
- \* Sympathy, 7 percent;
- \* Anxiety, 5 percent;
- \* Fear, 4 percent.

But these statistics do not tell the whole story...

Indeed, they don't. The Bible is also a place where we see real men and women crying. Most poignant of all, is the scene where Jesus himself is at Mary and Martha's place, just after Lazarus has died. The shortest verse in the Bible then unfolds: Jesus wept. (John 11:35) This tells us that our Lord was fully human and experienced what we experience. He can relate to what we are going through, and help us through whatever it is, if we trust him.

The other passages we read on this All Saints' Day give several versions of the promise of God wiping away our tears. These are great promises and imagination provoking in several ways. In Isaiah 25, the picture is of a great coming banquet, where God wipes away the tears of our disgrace and shame as believers. At the time beyond time in heaven, everyone will be celebrating God in person, Isaiah says.

In Revelation 21, John tells us that God moves into the neighborhood in heaven, everyone knows each other, and wiping away the tears means putting an end to death and mourning, crying and pain. Our existence will have changed, no longer will there be either death or taxes. It's hard to imagine, but we need to exercise our holy imaginations in this area. All things are new in heaven and Jesus knows us all, for he is the Creator and the Finisher, the first and the last.

Many of us have not taken much time to imagine what heaven is like. Some of us have images of being on the clouds with wings like angels, sometimes playing harps, something like the cream cheese commercials on TV. Some of us may think that heaven is 200 hundred year long choir rehearsals, complete with harp accompaniment, and 500 hundred year long sermons, but only from the best of history. Others say this sounds more like hell than heaven.

The reality is something beyond what we expect or imagine. Let me take a moment on this All Saints' Day to say it will be a time of reunion. We will see many and know much more than we do now about each other and about the Lord. We will not see everyone as the Scripture warns us. So it is good to be committing and re-committing ourselves to God. Please do so today.

But once we see our loved ones, once we ask questions of the great believers of all time, once we review our lives with the Lord, which will be the account we must give of our lives here on earth, which I often imagine as a large screen with the Lord sitting with us, talking to us about what we went through in our lives, gently correcting misconceptions we have both about God and Jesus and about our own lives, choices, lifestyle and relationships.

But after we spend more time doing these things, what happens with eternity? What do we do after the things the Scriptures tell us? Here I go onto unexplored territory and ask your patience as I paint a few pictures and then conclude.

For those who love romance, it will be greater than any novel or movie. For we will truly fall in love with the Lord and the Lord's ways, and live more happily ever after than we could ever imagine. It is the best ending to any fairy tale, with the ups and downs and adventure that any good story would have, except that it stretches on beyond centuries and millennia.

For those who love fantasy, the friendships and challenges of the journey will defeat all the obstacles and foes that are out there. We will journey to unknown lands and win battles that we cannot yet imagine. We will find new allies and new obstacles. But the Lord will lead us through everything that comes our way.

For those who love science fiction, the limits of space travel will be overcome and the away teams will be beyond what we can figure today, given our limited understanding of physics and distance. We will explore and encounter more than what we have seen and read in our imaginative journeys. We will see the greatness of our God.

And lest you think I've converted to scientology or some other strange religion, I've taken you very briefly through these three types of literature and media simply to say that heaven will be more than a reunion, more than sitting in worship for a long time. It will be an adventure. That's why All Saints' Day and the expectation of heaven is so much more interesting than the bad horror scenes of Halloween. Heaven is real and is coming. The Scripture says our tears will be wiped away and we will see and live with God and with one another. I'm simply suggesting an active heaven with more than we can ask or imagine. And yes, we'll be well rested, well in every way and quite energetic before going on our new mission.

Let us pray.