

**Hidden Warrior**  
Sermon Text: John 11:33-37

**When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”**

We all boarded the plane at the same time. The flight attendant scanned all the boarding passes, and everyone walked down the Jetway. If you looked at the people, they all looked normal. But, of course, they were different: men, women, children, old, young, and from different ethnic backgrounds. When we were comfortable in our seats, the attendant welcomed us all on board and welcomed one special passenger. When she announced his name, most did not know who he was, but then she said that he was a veteran who had earned the Medal of Honor for his valor on the battlefield. We were surprised and clapped our appreciation.

Our theme for this Lenten season is about the Son of God going forth to the war that would change the whole world. But Jesus did not look like a warrior any more than the passenger on the plane did. Jesus as our great warrior walked among the people like anyone else. You could say that he was a . . .

**Hidden Warrior**

**1. He wept like one of us!**

We are told that Jesus was like all of us. He got tired, hungry, and thirsty. When he was a child, he grew up like every other child. **“Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).**

But there was one difference. He had no sinful nature and was completely without sin. When he was a child, it must have felt unusual to be his parents. He was always respectful, smart, and obedient, even when they lost their temper for the wrong reasons or were grumpy. They never had to give him a time-out or a spanking, and they never had to send him to his room without supper.

Peter tells us that we were redeemed (ransomed, purchased) from sin, death, and the devil **“with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:19).** He goes on to tell us, **“[Jesus] committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22).**

Could you live a sinless, perfect life? I can’t and neither can you. That’s why I am so glad that Jesus remained without sin all his life. When he gave himself for us on the cross, we can know for certain that his was the absolutely perfect sacrifice! There has never been a human being like Jesus! But you couldn’t tell he was sinless by looking at him. He felt compassion for others, he wept, and he even was angry when God’s house was turned into a market.

If someone had paid close attention, they might have seen that he was different. Every year Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover (Luke 2:41). As a 12-year-old preteen, Jesus went with his family just as they always had. But Jesus showed he had come for the battle to come. As he

engaged the temple teachers in truth discussions, they could see that Jesus was a boy—he looked like your average sixth grader. But the words that came from his mouth gave evidence that he was much more! They were getting the first recorded peek at the hidden side of Jesus.

His greatness and his power were evident at times. On one occasion, this perfect Jesus arrived at the home of friends: Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, in Bethany (about 2 miles outside Jerusalem). Lazarus had died and been buried for four days when Jesus arrived. Mary was crying: **“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’” (John 11:33-36).**

What a caring heart Jesus has! That’s what caused him to cry real, salty, human tears when he saw the grave of his very good friend Lazarus. Even the people who were there to support the family of Mary and Martha could tell that those tears rolling down his face were real. They knew that Jesus had spent time with that family—they had eaten, laughed, and now cried together. Jesus felt their pain. It was a completely human thing.

You know what that is like. You have been at funerals of loved ones. Tears are the outflow of a grieving heart. The pain that comes from loss is very real. Jesus’ heart was as broken as yours or mine has ever been.

We have other tears to shed as well. Lent is a really good time to consider the pain we have caused others in our lives—how many times have our children been hurt by angry thoughtless words? How much irritation and anger have we caused because we’ve spent way too much time on Facebook, YouTube, or internet gaming? How many tears have been shed because we’ve allowed our love for our family to shrivel and starve? How many times have we avoided the chance to start a conversation about Jesus and left another soul untouched by our Savior’s love? How many regrets do each of us have because of our sins?

Really, this church ought to have a box of tissues alongside the hymnals as we grieve over our sin. True repentance begins with sorrow (contrition). Lord, let it be so tonight (today)!

We have something better than tissues to dry our honest tears! Because . . .

## **2. Great unimaginable power lies just beneath the surface of our warrior!**

Those in Bethany at the death of Lazarus had questions: **“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” (John 11:37).** Jesus grieved because of the damage sin had done. Death wasn’t part of God’s plan for this world. It was introduced by Satan from outside our earth. And we hate it.

The friends of Mary and Martha hated it too. They probably had heard—perhaps even seen—the recent miracle of restoring sight to the blind man in Jerusalem. Those friends were naturally wondering why Jesus had not used some of that healing power on Lazarus, his good friend. It’s the same question that was on Martha’s mind.

They asked because they knew there was something special about Jesus. We know that Jesus made the universe (Hebrews 1:2), which includes us! Think of the awesome power he has! Astronomers estimate that there are one hundred trillion galaxies in the universe, a number so big we can’t even imagine it, much less design it. They say there are more than ten million different species of animals on earth! Think of the unlimited creativity, brilliance, and power it took to

make all that! None of this was an accident.

St. Paul writes, **“Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:5-7).**

That means that the man Jesus is also the Son of God, the second person of the triune God. He’s NOT 50 percent human and 50 percent God. Rather, he is what the Bible describes as the God-man, 100 percent fully human and 100 percent fully God. Martin Luther said that trying to understand this was “like trying to illuminate the sun with a candle!”

This is the astounding truth: The eternal Son of God, when he was born in Bethlehem, added a second nature to his perfect, holy, almighty self. God also became a human being! “He made himself nothing,” literally means that he “emptied himself.” In other words, he set aside and put on the shelf much of his God nature. He hid his glory. But once in a while he peeled back the veil and let it show.

And this was one of those times. He told Martha that she would see the glory of God (John 11:40). You know the rest of this miraculous event. He called the dead Lazarus out of the grave. He showed a glimpse of the power at his disposal. He smacked death in the face and forced it to yield. Like a warrior practicing his skills before a great conflict, Jesus is getting ready for the final battle with Satan just a week or so away.

Look at the damage Satan has done and is still doing. His personal goal is to rob you of your faith, take away your hope, and see you burn in hell while he laughs in your face. He’s bigger than any human being can handle. That’s why God’s plan to save this world was so perfect. We have our sinless human Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for our sin. But if Jesus were just a perfect human, his life would only count as a sacrifice for himself alone, not for the rest of the world. He’d have to keep coming back and go through hell billions of times, once for each of us. But he is the all-powerful Son of God. His death was more precious than the death of one human. He is our substitute and the substitute of all humanity. His suffering and death was complete for each one of us! Perfect man. Perfect God. Perfect plan!

### **3. As both God and man, he fights for us.**

Jesus called Lazarus his friend (John 11:11). His friend Lazarus was important to him. He also calls you his friend and has made you his friend by Baptism. How do you think he feels about you, especially when you are at a weak spot in your life—kids picking on you in school, your coworkers constantly critical of your efforts, your spouse giving you the silent treatment, or your friends abandoning you? Look at the cross and find your answer there. Jesus has your back.

You and I will continue to struggle in our lives. Maybe it’s physical pain. Maybe your heart is aching. We struggle with doubts about our faith. Sometimes God seems far away, doesn’t he? You pray, but it seems as if he’s not listening. You read the Bible, but it doesn’t seem to speak to you. It’s almost as if he is hiding. For now, he actually is hiding in plain sight in his Word and sacraments.

We are fully aware of the fact that the devil and his evil angels are circling our lives, looking for pounce points. But we know that God has made this promise to each of us: “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

So picture this: With one hand the God-man Jesus is controlling our universe, and his other

hand is wrapped around you. You can't see it yet, because our risen Jesus, who fills the entire world with his presence, has chosen to remain hidden from our vision right now. But he's there—always has been there. He's working out his plan for you because you matter to him. The cross proves that!

He's fighting for you each and every day. The Bible tells us that he is making all things in our lives work together for our good! Every prayer you have uttered as a believer has been picked up by him and personally delivered to our heavenly Father. He has assigned angels to protect us as the spiritual battles are waged for our souls.

The tears of Jesus over the death of his good friend show that he cares deeply. The cross proves it. And our risen Jesus assures it. You're in the best and most powerful hands in the universe! Now he remains hidden, but his power remains through all eternity—for us now. You are in a mighty warrior's hands! Live boldly with him! Amen.

## **Endnotes**

### Word Study

ἔκλαυσεν (κλαίω) “weep loudly”; word often used for an unrestrained crying and lamenting (The People's Bible: *John*, p. 166), typical of Middle Eastern peoples still today. The women and friends mourned in such a way. Jesus himself mourned similarly for the people of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).

Ἐδάκρυσεν (δακρύω) “weep”; a quiet, private weeping; i.e., the sinful woman wiping Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:38).

“He wept for his friends. When we read the words today, we can imagine a sympathetic tear also for us. Then too we can imagine a sad tear for each person who does not see Jesus as the resurrection and the life. The Jews saw the tears and concluded he wept for Lazarus: a closer friend weeping at the grave. But, knowing what Jesus was about to do, we know his tears meant much more” (The People's Bible: *John*, p. 166).