

The Daughters of Jerusalem



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Luke 23:27-29

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed."

In the image above, painted by The Revd Ally Barratt, she has identified the women of Jerusalem from the stories in the gospels of the often unnamed women. Barclay in his commentary on Luke's gospel identifies these 'daughters of Jerusalem' as a group of women who would attend crucifixions in order to give the victims a drink of drugged wine in order to deaden their pain. We know that in first century Palestine professional mourners would attend deaths – presumably only in families rich enough to pay them – as part of the mourning ritual, to wail and give full rein to the lament of the family and friends.

Jesus tells these women not to weep for him but to save their tears for their own needs, he may have been referring to the Last Judgement or simply to the destruction of the temple which will come much sooner. It is another demonstration of his care for others, even in these last hours of his life, his compassion which caused him also to say 'Father forgive them' as they nailed him to the cross. Hard to imagine such love for others which supersedes his fear for his own pain.

Many people have demonstrated love for others by continuing to work in places which put them at risk in these difficult times, by volunteering to support those who are in need. Those people are much more important than those whose concern was only for their own needs as they selfishly bought everything they could lay their hands on in our supermarkets.

Via Dolorosa

In the knowledge
Of what is to come,
He can weep –
But not for himself.

O Jerusalem!
The chicks would not gather
Into the safety
Of their mother's love.

And in that great downfall
None will be spared.
The guilty will take the
innocent
Down into the abyss.

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There may be situations that cause us to weep at this difficult time, not just illness and death but also the pain of lost friendships, financial worry, fear of what the future will hold... but simply weeping is not enough for Christians, we need to follow Christ in all that he commanded to help those in need. That may be harder just now especially if we are in isolation, but there *are* still ways in which we can bring release and help to our neighbours...

The women of modern-day Jerusalem put together the service for the Women's World Day of Prayer in 1994, and at the end of the service they used this prayer;

Lord Jesus Christ, you have called us to follow you.

Lord, help us to GO.

Lord Jesus Christ, you have commanded us to seek the sad, the lonely, the oppressed.

Lord, help us to SEE.

Lord Jesus Christ, you have commissioned us to serve the needy.

Lord, help us to ACT.

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Spend a moment praying for those who are in need, your families, your friends and your neighbours, not because this is the only thing you can do, but because this is the *best* thing you can do.

Heavenly Father, strengthen us now, that we may walk the way of the cross, following in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.