

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – Sunday December 11, 2005

On this day in 1962, Christian apologist Francis Schaeffer wrote in a letter: "It's a mistake as Christians to act as though trusting the Lord and tears are not compatible."

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus: Thank You for every reminder that there is no trust without tears. All our vulnerability is taxed in trusting each other, for we all can betray trust and be betrayed. Yet even in trusting You, there are tears, for You, O Man of Sorrows, mingle Your tears with the tears of all sorrowing souls, and You call us to weep with them, with You.

Lord, this is a hard world. Your word says it's a hard world because it's a fallen world. We've made such a mess of Eden. And it's hard for the just as well as the unjust. The unjust reap what they sow and they weep, not grasping the deepest reason why. The just weep over wrongs they see in themselves and wrongs they see in the world, and weep over all the cost to You. Yet, having been forgiven once again, we have tears of joy.

Lord, surely, if we follow You, the "despised and rejected," we cannot expect to be the warmly received. Yet knowing You'd be the "despised and rejected," You still came into this world to seek and save all Your despisers. You're the only one who ever chose to be born. And You chose to be born to die, that we might be born anew, that we might become like You. To know how to love You in return for loving us like that, we need only recall Your saying: "Love one another as I have loved you." So help us to love as You do, to incarnate ourselves in all who weep – weeping with them and not merely weeping for them. And so doing, we rest in Your arms and shed tears of joy.

And here in Advent, our tears are tears of joy, O Emmanuel, God with us, for You do know us, not only as our Creator, but as one of us, from our insides, from our very beginnings. Our tears of joy do wash away all our other tears, for today is Sunday and Sunday's always Easter – even in Advent. In all our preparations for Christmas, may we remember the whole story of Your grace and peace, Your good will to all the world. Continue to conform us to all You would have us become in You – even in this hour of worship together. Thank You for hearing us as we add the prayer You taught us, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.