

Weep Not for Me

by Vance Havner

Jesus' words to the weeping women in Luke 23:27-31 are a call to repentance and a reminder of the importance of living a life of faith and obedience to God.

Duration: 37:44

Scripture: Matthew 5:4, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 23:37-39, Matthew 24:15-20, Luke 19:41-44, Luke 21:20-24, Luke 23:27-31

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the scene where Jesus is being crucified and the women are crying for him. He explains that Jesus was not a helpless victim, but willingly laid down his life according to God's plan. The preacher also discusses the advancements of science and technology, acknowledging their achievements but questioning their impact on humanity's moral character. He emphasizes the need for Christians, especially women, to weep and pray more, and to be vigilant in their spiritual lives. The sermon concludes with a call to action for the listeners to take the message to heart and make changes in their lives.

Transcript

I'm in my 68th year as a preacher, and next October I'll be 80, so I've been around for a pretty good while, but this is the busiest year I've ever had in my life. I don't know what that means exactly, but I always have had a prayer in my heart, and it ought to be the prayer of everybody who comes to church, that I might enter the pulpit every time as though it were the first time, fresh and new, anointed from heaven, and as though it might be the best time, best service we ever had, and as though it might be the last time. And you give me a group of people that go to church like that, instead of some of the awful reasons they do go, and if they'll go for the first reason, as though it were the first time, fresh and new, and as though it might be the best meeting they ever attended, and it could be, and as though it might be the last, and it could be, and this might be somebody's last attendance at church.

I think something would happen that we're not seeing happen in a great many of our churches today. I just want to call your attention to a very strange text for a Mother's Day sermon. It's found in Luke 23, 27 to 31.

Jesus was on his way to be crucified, and there was a crowd of people. Some of them were his enemies. Some were curious just to see what was going to happen next.

Some were friends, and in this group there was a band of weeping women, and Jesus turned on them. There followed him a great company of people and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

Then he went on to say the days would come, and it would be said, Blessed are you if you don't have any children, in that next verse. And verse 30, Then shall they begin to pray to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? That's a very mysterious passage of scripture.

I don't hear sermons on that much. Let it be said to the credit of womanhood that there's no record in the Bible anywhere, and especially none in the New Testament, that they ever took a stand against Jesus Christ. Pilate's wife sent him a note and warned him, Don't be careful what you do about this man, Jesus, because I've suffered things in a dream about him.

Mary and Martha loved him, and he had the support of some women, Luke 8, 3, who gave him money, who contributed to his support. That's forgotten oftentimes. Jesus didn't just go around on charity.

He was partly supported, at least by women, says so, Luke 8, 3. Only God knows how many women through the centuries have held the church together. I am from the First Baptist Church of Greensboro. That's where I belong.

There's an old history of that church in which one of the pastors a long, long time ago said I was often laughed at when I preached because Baptists were held in poor repute in those days. They were scorned and looked down upon. And he said we had a few faithful women in those early days.

He recalls a snowstorm when one of them made her way with her little child by her side, threw all of it, she said somebody's got to keep up the work of the Lord. Well, we could stand some more of that these days. And how many of them have prayed down revival when the situation looked absolutely hopeless? How many preachers' wives, by wise counsel and gentle reproof, have kept their husbands in the ministry when they might have been cast away? And how many have prayed down healing from heaven after midnight when the doctor had already given them up and they lived? How many mothers' prayers have followed sons and daughters away from home and brought prodigals back from the far country to the father's house? One of our evangelists today tells the story that when he was quite a baby, his mother built a little altar out in the backyard, went out there and laid him on it and knelt, dedicating him to the Lord.

That was making it literal, and her prayers followed him. And I remember an old Corinth Baptist church where I grew up in the country. I remember how old Sister Pope used to get up and ask us to pray for her boys.

Well, I don't think anybody prayed for them much because they seemed beyond redemption, a lot of them. But it wasn't that way with her. And I go back there now to preach.

One of those boys grew up to be superintendent of the Sunday school, and three of them were deacons, and there are two preachers among the grandsons. She didn't take no for an answer. She prayed God for those boys, and they all came through.

I remember that years ago, my mother was very sick, taken rather suddenly while I was in conference in Michigan, and the message came that your mother's quite ill. I remember old Dr. Bob Jones Sr. put his

arm around me and prayed for me as I left to go home. And the last message she ever sent to me, as my crippled brother was trying to write a letter, tell Vance to keep up the good fight, for God is with him, and if God be for us, who can be against us? I tell you, if we had more like that today, there might be more preaching from the pulpit and more godly living from the pew.

I've spent a lifetime seeking things I've spurned when I have found them. I've fought and been rewarded many a petty cause, but I give them all fame, fortune, and the pleasures that do with them, for a little of faith that made my mother what she was. The same year my mother died, I took my wife-to-be up to meet her, and I didn't know that.

Talk about changing horses in midstream. I was changing from mother to wife, and in the same summer and within a few weeks, mother had gone out of the picture. Just a little later, Sarah came in, and now Sarah's been out of the picture for seven years and a half.

As old Dr. Robert G. Lee said when I was in his home some couple of years ago, we walked in and looked at that fine picture of Mother Lee over on the wall. He said, and it doesn't get any easier. It doesn't if you really love them.

Of course, a lot of people today are not in love when they get married. That's showing up everywhere. They don't miss them much when they go.

Some of them help them to go. So we're living in very strange and mysterious times. So for 33 years, we traveled America together all over the country.

When she did stay at home and I was away, we sent an airmail letter to each other every day, and especially on Sunday, and called each other up over the week. We meant business, and we could stand some more of that today. I did the same, and now even in the motels where I've stayed all these years since I started in the ministry, I mean my 41st year on the road.

If you think that's a picnic, you ought to try that. I have to readjust every week of my life, bed, food, water, climate, and not many people have ever been able to do it. I've had strong preachers to say, man, I've got to get back to my bed.

I can't take a life like this. Change every week somewhat, but by the grace of God, but I find myself sometimes walking down the steps at the motel. I was so used to getting that special delivery in the mailbox, you know, back of the desk always at the hotel.

My eyes, my subconscious mind still operates it, I guess. I find myself unconsciously looking over at that box as though there might be a letter in it, knowing full well that there isn't. But Jesus turned to this little group of women and said, don't cry for me.

Now, what did he mean? Didn't he appreciate their sympathy, their tears? Was their grief out of place? Well, they were crying about the wrong thing. Jesus was saying, I'm not a helpless victim of a mob. I could have snapped my fingers and called down 12 legions of angels.

I'm not that weak. And I'm climbing this hill voluntarily on purpose to lay down my life. And they think they're killing me, but I'm going in the purpose of God.

He said, I can lay down my life and I can take it again. You can lay yours down, but you can't take it again. You can't resurrect yourself.

But Jesus died as nobody else has ever died, took charge of his own funeral, made arrangements for his mother to have a place to live, bought that old FIFA ticket to paradise, all kinds of things, and died himself. And he was the son of God, which explains it all. He went up there for your sake and mine to take care of our sins.

But he said to Pilate, you couldn't do a thing if you didn't have authority in heaven. He was in charge of the trial and he was the prisoner. He could have called down 10,000 angels to destroy the world and set him free.

He could have called 10,000 angels, but he died alone for you and me. Now these days when Easter comes along and Good Friday, a lot of dear people get weepy about poor Jesus. And in the pictures and in the music and in the sermons, we sigh for the suffering Savior and think we're very religious, but we miss the point entirely.

We miss a lot of points. There's no way in the New Testament we're told to celebrate the birth of Jesus, for instance. We do it, but it's not told in the New Testament.

It's all right, I enjoy Christmas as well as anybody, but we're not told in the New Testament to observe the resurrection as a holiday. We are told to commemorate his death at the Lord's table. So we ought to get it straight, but he didn't need sympathy then.

He doesn't need it now. We weep for him, and I believe he's saying to mothers today, and he's saying to fathers and husbands and wives, don't cry for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children, because there's more to weep about than there ever has been before.

Why did he call them daughters of Jerusalem? Because 40 years later, the very things he said here would come to pass, and the awful things broke loose. He said, if they do this to an innocent person, if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done when the time comes for judgment? They'll begin to say that the mountains fall on us and the hills cover us. Just 40 years after he said that, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were butchered.

Their city was plowed under, Josephus says, the multitude that perished exceeded all the destruction that God or man has ever brought on the world. Of course, that was up to the time of Josephus. And Jesus said in this very verse that you noticed a while ago, you're better off when that time comes if you don't have any children.

He'd already said it in Matthew 24, 19. Now, for a Jewish woman not to have any children was a disgrace, and it was grounds for divorce. And people will say in that day, he said, blessed are you if you don't have any, because of the awful judgment upon Jerusalem.

And cry for the rocks and the mountains. He had wept over Jerusalem. I stood on the Mount of Olives.

Some years ago, I told the rest of the crowd, go wherever you want to. I'm spending the rest of the day up here by myself. I want to be by myself.

And I stood up there and looked off of that mountain where he stood and said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathers her chickens under wings, and you would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate, for I say unto you, you will not see me any more till you say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. For the days will come that thine enemies shall cast a trench around you, encompass you around, keep you on every side, lay thee even with the ground and thy children with thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone on another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

You didn't have your calendar right. You didn't know what was coming. And just a few hours before this, that generation had cried out, His blood be upon us and our children.

What an awful thing to say, asking it. And Jesus said, Well, it is. And it is.

It has been through the ages for those who crucified him. But that's not all he meant. He was looking forward to his second coming.

You have them both in the Olivet discourse. And the Bible scholars still argue on when is he talking here about the fall of Jerusalem? And when is he talking about the end of the age? Well, I don't know that anybody's ever figured it out perfectly. But it's like looking at two ranges of mountains, one higher behind the front range.

He was looking first at the capture of Jerusalem, beyond that the time when he will come. We don't hear much about Judgment Day anymore. It's out of style.

Preach about it. Don't hear much about it. But the Bible has plenty to say about it.

When the sixth seal was opened, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell on the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken by a mighty wind. We read that the heavens will depart as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island move out of their presence. And the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men and the chief captains and mighty men and every bondman and every free man hid themselves in the dens in the rocks of the mountains.

He said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us in the face of him that sitteth on the throne from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is coming, who shall be able to stand? Now, that day is coming. That's not a figure of speech.

This is on the books, friends. I don't know when it's coming. We don't hear much about it.

But Jesus presided the compassionate Father who could also be a consuming fire. God is both. We think of God today as a good-natured grandfatherly being, about as much authority as Santa Claus has, the big buddy upstairs.

We used to sing, I dreamed a great judgment morning had come, and oh, what a weeping and wailing as the lost were told of their fate. They cried for the rocks and the mountains, they prayed, but the prayer was too late. I'll never forget in that country community when one of the boys, one of the farm boys in one of the homes died of pneumonia, and we went out to the house, and it was packed with folks gathered around, and the old country doctor was there.

And this boy, before he died, he had never trusted Christ, tried the same with when he was practically out of breath. Where shall I be when the great trumpet sounds? When the great trumpet sounds to wake up the dead, where shall I be when it sounds? You don't forget that when somebody's ready and not ready both, going to die and not prepared. And you have that in the Word of God, and Jesus talked about hell.

Hell is a byword now, and so is God. And we toss the name around. I can't help but feel a holy indignation to allusion God and hell and damn as curse words when damnation has such awful meaning in the Word of God.

And the weeping and the wailing in the fire where the worm doth not, and the fire is not quenched. Nobody wants to hear about it. They say we, those are back in the old times, the times have changed.

You're right, friends, they've changed. But I'm not proud of it, and neither should we be, because we're to weep, not for him. He's all right.

Jesus is in good shape. His troubles are all over. Bless God he's coming back one of these days.

But our troubles are not over. And we do well to weep for ourselves. If you have sins that stand between you and the were you there when they crucified my Lord? We sing it.

Yes, we were there. The whole human race was there. Everybody that's ever lived is there.

We helped put him there. We helped crucify him. We get sentimental about poor Jesus.

And America is laughing itself to death these days in front of all the garbage of television and making a joke out of the solemnities of God's word. We're in a strange time. I woke at two o'clock this morning, and I couldn't get it off my mind, pondering the state we're in.

Skepticism. We started out with that. Then we got around to secularism, which somebody has called the practice of the absence of God.

People are living today as though God had gone out of business. Have you stopped to think how many millions of America this morning are living as though there were no church? Plenty of them right here in Spartanburg. No God.

And that was the beginning, and secularism came along. And now we've got humanism. And you know what humanism is? Humanism is when we make ourselves God.

The first thing the devil said to our parents in the Garden of Eden was, You shall be as God's. And we are becoming like that today. And one of the great scholars today, Dr. Schaefer, says that when we throw away the absolute, the absolute authority of the Bible, the absolute sovereignty of God, the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ, then we're the absolute.

When you're the absolute, you're your own God. If I think this is all right, for me it's all right. That's what people are saying by the thousands and thousands today, in every direction.

Man decides. And we're therefore headed for the day when all these gods, the same crowd you're looking at now, these gods, people who make themselves God, we're going to get in the worst mess we've ever been in. And we are already in the worst mess since Adam and Eve ate us out of the house and home in the Garden of Eden.

We're in the worst condition. But you ain't seen nothing yet, friends, because the day will come when, in desperation, America, like Germany, turn to Hitler. Germany, we and the rest, will turn to the strange character that is to come in the last days by the name of Antichrist.

And he will claim to be God. Don't forget it. The devil started off.

You'll be gods, and we are becoming fast now. Man is the absolute. We're getting so smart these days.

We're going to start inventing clones. Now, you know what a clone is. You're going to make people in laboratories, not the old way.

You're going to invent them. And there are already dissects in the Bible of all the stupid, inane, idiotic things that I've read lately. You want to get out of the Bible and know he or she isn't a god, just the parent.

And that's part of some of the feminist movement, of course. And we are doing things that you wouldn't think intelligent people who can put a man on the moon and split the atom. But the trouble is, we're smart enough to walk on the moon and not safe enough to walk down the street anymore.

Some time ago, I sat in my room when I was preaching in Jacksonville and watched the fellows go up into space on the television and looked out the window in the park. I wanted to walk in, didn't dare. They said, you better not.

There's enough creeps and crooks and demons around there. They're clobbering you if you go out. And I said, now aren't we in for something? Why, when I grew up, we didn't even lock the old house to go to a revival meeting in the summertime.

Now I live in motels, and I was in one the other day where they had the telephone screwed to the table. You heard about that woman that said, what in this world are we coming to? Why, somebody broke in my house the other day and stole all my Holiday Inn towels. A terrible thing.

I said it at the, I'm going, I'm supposed to go down in a couple of weeks to Los Angeles to speak to the preachers at our convention, the pastoral conference part of it. And I am much concerned about, I think about when I was out there the last time to the evangelistic conference. And we had, of course, a crowd of preachers.

But the strange thing is that I made a statement that a few years ago you'd get a lot of amen's on. I didn't expect it this time. I said America is sex crazy, show crazy, and sports crazy.

I still don't get any amen's on. I'm not against clean sports, but we've come to a day when it has become a monster. And the Bible itself says, well it helps a little.

It says bodily exercise profiteth for a little. But not much evidently. Bodily exercise profiteth little.

But here's something that does profit. But Godliness is profitable and all things. Having promise of the life that now is of that which is come.

I don't, I walk a lot. That's one thing that's kept me going all these years I think. I don't jog.

I heard of a fellow the other day dropped dead jogging home from a health food store. Now you figure that one out. Something didn't work, some work.

Hmm. But Dr. Louis Evans said that one of these great nuclear engineers, he was out there at one of the bases, he said he's showing me these monsters, the replicas of them out on the exhibit take off into space. Telling me what something as much as he thought a preacher could take in, how they got it together.

And then when he finished he turned to me though and said, preacher, you're a man of God I suppose. Pray for me. My wife is leaving me tomorrow.

And my home is breaking up. Smart enough to invent all that and couldn't keep the family together. So, it's about time.

We're proud today of our devices. We don't have the trouble with what we've invented. It's great stuff.

These are marvelous things. They're brain-boggling. They're things that they're turning out the laboratory's butt.

We haven't got now the moral character and capacity and integrity to manage it. Because if we'd had that integrity, we wouldn't have had some of the things that we're going to have to manage on these days. You see, that's where somehow we missed out.

In the first world, when the last of our world fairs was held, somebody said the theme of it was the achievements of science and their application through industry to the creation of a larger life for all mankind. He said, I could see the achievements of science all right. I could see their application through industry, but I couldn't find that larger life for all mankind.

That's what I call gaining the whole world and losing your own soul. What's it going to help us if we invent all this stuff and end up with the morals of an alley cat? The wisdom of man and the wisdom of God are set side by side in the Bible. The world holds the wisdom of God foolishly.

Jesus said to these women, weep for yourself and you'll be killed. Two years ago, teenagers set a record for suicide. Wouldn't you think they'd be so full of the joy of life it wouldn't occur to you? They're serious today.

I have a better response from young people today at my age than I've ever had in the ministry. I don't believe in lambasting the kids all the time. They didn't create this, they inherited it, and they got most of us from us.

But you know conditions. I don't need to read statistics. Thousands of minds being blown by drugs and young alcoholics and unmarried, unwed, mothers in early teens all over the land.

We need to weep for a generation pure in its own eyes and not watch the maturity the Bible calls it. Weep for this new set fruit of abortion, homosexuality, pornography, broken homes. There was a time when mothers, more than now, and I say this with all respect for those who do, if we didn't have some of them left we couldn't operate in the church.

But I don't know when I've heard any dad or mom come to me and say my boy's lost, my girl's lost. They used to say it. That's the kind of people Jesus came to seek and to save was the lost.

I remember in the olden times when they were bothered and came and knelt at the mourner's bench and prayed for the salvation of their souls. I don't I don't hear that word. That's out these days.

God's been trying to warn us. One of the strangest things that ever happened in our history was the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. There are books coming out now about the Titanic.

There's been a movie about it. Instead of being forgotten, we can't forget whatever happened. How come? I found eight volumes in the library in Greensboro and got hold of another one the other day.

They're going to send an exhibition as soon as the weather gets a little warmer over there to try to get at it this time. It's so deep. They have seen it from a distance, quite a distance, but with the new submarine equipment they hope to get close enough to maybe get to it but get a better picture of it.

What in the world? It couldn't sink, they said. It was the finest thing we ever made up until then. Oh, this is okay.

Nothing could sink it. And the only thing it ever did was sink. And on the first trip, and 1,200 people drowned.

Old Mordecai Hamm used to say God was trying to teach us an object lesson in American. We didn't get it. We didn't learn it.

But I think God was saying, now you think you're smart. And it can't sink. The only thing I need is a hunk of ice to slit open one side of it and prove to you that it deep can't.

I wonder when we will awaken to what God's trying to whisper to some of us today. The people who used to say pray for my children, they say, well, my Johnny's a good boy. And I say, yes, so was the rich young ruler, but he wasn't God's boy.

And you don't go to heaven by being a good boy and a good girl. You go by being born again and becoming a child of God. Lost a generation of youth because too many have had us leave the Bible standard.

Too many children would have to say over this country. One after an automobile accident and dying in a hospital said to her mother, mom, you taught me to drink cocktails. You taught me to smoke.

You didn't tell me how to die. And it looks like that's the next thing. What would you say if faced with that? I'm glad they're smart as they are.

I think we're spoiling their childhood. These kids today can make a fortune on TV commercials acting and others in acting in the play. I heard a bunch the other day talking about ecology.

Imagine, not teenagers even, and talking intelligently about it. They ought to have been out in the backyard, I think, playing hopscotch. They ought to have had their childhood.

It's a terrible thing not to have it. I started out preaching when I was 12 years of age, and I think God was in it in that case. But you lose something in the process, and we shouldn't do it for just anything.

No wonder people are agitated. No wonder you can't sleep without Valium. I don't know.

I wonder how many people here have got some Valium pills at home. Can't sleep. The doctor after my wife died, and I suffered for two years, years ago, with insomnia and depression, and only the Lord knows what I went through.

And I didn't take sedatives then. But the doctor gave me a bottle of them and said, take them, said they won't hurt you. Well, I said, Lord, I'm not getting hooked.

I'm not getting hooked. I said, I've got to preach, and if I'm going to preach, you've got to sleep, and you're going to have to help me. And I'm making it.

Of course, I'm getting the other way now. I can't sleep all the time. It's giving me a chance.

I'm like that old boy in the mountains who, when the doctor says, see, now I'm kind of having trouble sleeping. The doctor said, well, how does it treat you? I said, do all right overnight and do pretty well in the afternoon, but it seemed like in the morning I'd just roll and toss. Well, I'm having some of that.

Well, it's a good thing to be ready and have the Lord at your side. We need to weep. But could my zeal know respite? No, could my tears forever flow? All for sin could not atone.

Thou must save, and thou alone. It's not a fountain of tears. That wouldn't take care of your sin.

It takes another fountain. Godly sorrow, work of repentance. But that fountain for sin and cleanliness is not a fountain of tears.

It's a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins. So I urge you this morning, I know you may think this is a strange sermon for a brother's man, but I'm concerned about these times. I could take it a lot easier.

I don't have to preach as much as I'm preaching these days, but I'm overdoing it for the sake of some that are underdoing it. And somebody ought to be concerned, and somebody ought to be bothered. And I don't know how I make it, really I don't, but thank God I've made it this long.

And when you're practically 80, you've had a long span, you can't grumble then with all that stack of years behind you anyhow. But I'm glad that we have a Savior who came down here. He didn't come down when people sin today, everybody jumps on top of them.

Somebody said that they do that even in church. And Martha Brannon sang last week in my meetings in Virginia Beach, that wonderful woman who sings as few can sing. She passed on something to me that I hadn't heard.

She said, the church is the army of the Lord, and it's the only army on earth that shoots its wounded. Do you ever think about that? If a fellow makes a mistake, they all jump on top of it. I know a man now that's in deep trouble, and I'm shocked like everybody else.

I can't believe he did it. And I'm not exonerating him, and I'm not justifying him, but I'm not going to jump on him because Jesus came down here to deal with that, and he didn't come down here to rub it in. Bless God he came to rub it out, came to take our sins and let that be the source of our joy.

So it's these few evenings, and now we have such short meetings. This is a long meeting now for me. They run them now Sunday through Wednesday.

We're in a hurry, Lord. Are you going to have a revival or act quick, you know? But I'm staying a long time, Brother Tim, I declare. And you've been here a long time too, 34 years.

Bless his heart. Thank God for preachers who can stay a while. We got a crop of two-year preachers now.

They tell all they know in two years, and then they go into life insurance. Lord, help us. Tim, if I ever hear you selling life insurance, I'm out with you.

Aren't you glad that we've got a Savior who, although he doesn't approve of sin, he saves sinners. Trust him. Get on that old road, the T and O, trust and obey.

I used to ride on the C and O and the B and O, but I'll tell you the one that takes you somewhere is that old T and O. Trust and obey. That's the way to be happy in Jesus. God help what he does.

Father, we thank thee for this church and for this dear man of God that we've learned to love in the gospel, and for these dear people. Help them to understand why I said what I said this morning, and a strange sermon for mothers, but I know that every Christian mother in this place will say, Preacher, you were right. We ought to be weeping more.

We ought to be praying more, and the women of this country are not doing too well, by and large, and they need to be doing something about it. Lord, apply this truth to every heart. We're not preaching things that folks like.

We're trying to preach things people need, and we all need this message in our own hearts. We're all failing thee in our watchfulness, in our prayer life, in our Bible reading, and during these two evenings together, and maybe this morning, Father, Brother Tim closes his sermon. It might be somebody who says, I've heard too much this morning to walk out of here and do nothing about it.

Bless this hour to our hearts in Jesus' name. Amen.

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