

"When Mourning comes"

Five Helpful Thoughts When Grieving

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Text: John 11: 1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.
²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, * 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' ⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' ⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus* was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' ⁸The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' ⁹Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' ¹¹After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' ¹²The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' ¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' ¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, * said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus* had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles* away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' ²³Jesus said to her, 'Your brother

will rise again.’²⁴ Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’²⁵ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life.* Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’²⁷ She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,* the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’

28 When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, ‘The Teacher is here and is calling for you.’²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, **he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.**³⁴ He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’³⁵ **Jesus began to weep.**³⁶ So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’³⁷ But some of them said, ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?’

38 **Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed,** came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.³⁹ Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, ‘Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.’⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me.⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.’⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

Sermon :

If you have suffered the loss of a loved one – please, raise your hand. In your heart of hearts, identify that person by name. Our Lord Jesus experienced losing someone very special to him... his name: Lazarus.

As Jesus is about to be escorted to the place where the corpse lay of his dear friend -- we read in verse 35:

“Jesus began to weep”

The Greek word used here for “weep” means: to cry aloud -- deeply, hoarsely and brokenly.” When our Lord Jesus arrives at the tomb we read in verse 38 that Jesus was...

“... again, greatly disturbed....”

The Greek words used depict the experience of when: “one bowels are wretched in agony.” There is a quality of personal involvement and intensity conveyed in these words.

CHRISTIANS - note this from our text: He who not only believed in the promise of Resurrection to Eternal Life but also He who was and is “ the Resurrection and life “-- upon the death of his dear friend grieved deeply.

We Christians often express guilt when feeling: sad, depressed, lonely and despairingly as we grieve the death of our loved one. We try to talk ourselves out of the way we are feeling. We say to ourselves “I shouldn’t feel the way I am feeling because my loved one is “far better off” in heaven.” We say to ourselves: “I shouldn’t feel the way we are feeling because I am thinking only of myself. I am just feeling sorry for myself... having a ‘pity party.’” As we grieve, often we apologize for the shedding tears because we are feeling sorrowful instead of joy filled. We are embarrassed that we don’t feel more at peace than we do. Rather, as we grieve, we are feeling more and more estranged, angry, resentful and/or disoriented.

Following the Viet Nam War, with all its tragedy and death, a scientific poll was taken which asked: “How long is it normal to mourn the loss of a loved one?” The overwhelming majority thought that individuals should be through mourning between 48 hours and 2 weeks after the death. Similar surveys have been since conducted. There is little variations in the findings. Society believes we should be through grieving in two days to two weeks.

Grieving a “normal” or “good death” where the person and family are ready and accepting that “it is time” -- takes 2 to 5 years to reach a healthy re-orientation. Grieving a “traumatic acute death” like a child killed in an auto accident or death comes by suicide -- takes 5 year to 7 years to reach a healthy re-orientation ... and often remains opened ended.

#1 Helpful Thought:

Give yourself permission to grieve and time to grieve.

When a loved one dies we grieve more than one death. Our

relationship and our interactions with those closest to us: (1) help us define who we are; (2) help us determine what we are about. Your relationship with the one you grieve may have been as: wife; husband; son, daughter, sibling ; companion. The part of you and me that was: spouse; child; sister, brother; helper; friend...also died.

(Story told of my mother after my dad's death upon inviting her in the early summer to spend the coming winter with us in Florida saying to me "I don't make plans anymore. All my plans have been ruined." She longed for the "us" and "we" of her married life and resented living life as an "I" and "me.")

2 Helpful Thought:

When a loved one dies there are two deaths.

There is the death of that significant one. And, there is the death that occurs in us, that is -- the loss of our identity – the loss of place. The death of a loved one brings unwanted change into our lives. We are forced to make the change from a "we" to an "I" . We are forced to make the unwanted change from an "us" to a "me."

Thus, grief is more than just feeling sad. Grief stimulates within us an array of emotions, thoughts, feelings --

- Fear
- Anger
- Guilt
- Relief
- Resentfulness
- Abandonment

- Estrangement
- Depression
- Isolation
- Jealousy
- Confusion
- Disorientation

- Vulnerability
- Thankfulness
- Numbness
- Emptiness
- Peacefulness

- Anxiety
- Bitterness
- Weariness
- Fatigue

The feelings experienced during grief are complex and often contradictory. It takes time and a great amount of effort to sort through these. Grief is difficult, indeed. It takes work.

#3 Helpful Thought:

Grief is not something you get over.

Grief is something you go through.

One of our sisters in Christ, a few of months following the death of her husband was told:

“ Get over it. Get on with your life.”

I don't want to “get over” my loved ones. I don't want to ever “get over” my father, my mother. I don't want to ever “forget” them. I want always to hold them close -- in mind, spirit and memory. These dear ones have left their mark on my being and my life. I regard them as a gift sent to me by God. I don't want ever to get over them. What I do want to do is get through these feelings of grief.

#4 Helpful Thought:

Get involved in a grief and support group.

Not all people want to hear your grief story... especially, those close to you. They want you to get on with your life. They want things back to normal. They want to deny anything is wrong or different. They don't want to hear it.

(Story told of 9/11 families in grief which we hosted through Project” CHEER providing for them an all-expense-paid long weekend of respite and recreation in the Orlando area. One woman - grieving the death of her firefighter husband - shared that no one in New York wanted anymore to listen to her as she talked about her Dennis's death. “It is so wonderful to be here with people who wanted to listen to me and hear my grief story.”)

And...when we grieve, what we grieve is not necessarily- the loss of relationship we had with that person. We may well grieve the relationship we didn't have with that person. We grieve the ideal -- that which never was.

#5 Helpful Thought:

Grieving what might have been is just as intense and as deep
as grieving what was.

Son continued long after his father's death to weep deep and tender
tears for his father. It was confusing to his mother, because the
behavior towards the son as a child was abusive and as an adult was
estranged. The son wept not for the of what was, but for – what never
was.

If you had one hour to live, who would you want to talk to? What
would you want to say to, to share with that person?

(looking at watch)

Contact that person.
Say what you need to say to them.

You have that hour.