

Sermon 8-27-17 Healing from loneliness Psalm 73:23-28

Dear Servants of Christ:

A newspaper ran a story of a young man who went bow hunting in Ontario, Canada for moose and bear. He was told that he “would not see another human being for 10 days.”

- His reaction - “I will love it”
- One can be alone and not feel lonely
- One can be in a crowd of people and feel very lonely

What might cause one to be lonely?

- You don't know anyone and no one knows you
- You hold a different view from the rest of the group
- You have suffered a loss
- You don't understand yourself
- You feel as if no one cares

“Loneliness is not just sad emotion. It can be a spiritual minefield filled with rejection and emptiness ready to explode and cripple our faith in Christ.”

Loneliness has...

- Driven people into cults
- Shattered marriages
- Alienated parents and children

Loneliness can make us vulnerable to anger, discouragement, self-pity and make us want to withdraw from others.

But Jesus took on loneliness for us so that we will never have to be lonely.

Of all the wounds that our Lord received none so struck so terrorized and so weighed on Him as the loneliness he experienced on the cross for us.

- On Good Friday Jesus was forsaken of God
- He was cut off from the living
- He was utterly and ultimately alone
- For us He endured hell

Sin brings loneliness and Jesus took all of our sin upon Himself.

- Sin separates one from God
- But Jesus took that separation for us

Jesus brought us healing from loneliness

Psalm 73 was written by a man who was the chief musician for King David. His name was Asaph.

- He was filled with discouragement and self-pity
- He would look around at other people ---unbelievers---and see the good life they had and wonder why they had it better than he did.

Psalm 73:3-5; 12-14

Asaph came to this conclusion: Unbelievers are better off --- it doesn't pay to follow God.

- Why should I waste my time in worship if the unbeliever is better off?
- Why should I waste my time studying the Bible if the unbeliever is better off?
- Why should I spend my time serving God if the unbeliever is better off?

It just doesn't make sense. It won't make sense until we enter the presence of God and meditate upon His word.

Psalm 73:16-17 "When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."

"Understand their final destiny"

Where are the unbelievers going?

Jesus says that those who live apart from God have their reward right now on earth. All their life is going to amount to is what they have right now. Without God in their life they have no future---no eternal life. Read Psalm 37

Unbelievers may have material possession to take their loneliness away on earth but the only lasting remedy for loneliness is found in Jesus and what he offers to us.

"What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?"

Healing from loneliness

I. Look at how Jesus experienced lonely conditions for you and me

A. Did Jesus ever feel lonely?

1. He was always surrounded by crowds as he healed people and taught them
2. He was always conscious of His Father's presence – daily prayer was His habit
3. He was always accompanied by His disciples

Yet, on the cross Jesus cried: My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?

B. Jesus knew when to be alone

“Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” Luke 5:16

- He needed time to recharge His body and emotions
- He needed to be in prayer and speak to His Father
- He was alone in Gethsemane but He was not lonely
- His disciples fled when He was arrested by the mob

C. Jesus was insulated from loneliness because of the fellowship He had with the Father

1. Asaph, too, saw fellowship with the Father as the remedy for loneliness Ps 73: 23-25
2. Jesus was confident that He had the Father's constant support
3. He realized He was not by Himself when He was...
- arrested- on trial- mocked- beaten- put on the cross
4. Jesus had a constant and personal fellowship with the Father

God takes us by the right hand. We have fellowship with Him through the Word and Sacrament.

The story of Kathryn Koob

Back in November of 1979 our fellow Americans in our embassy in Iran were taken hostage. For the next 13 months our fellow Americans were kept isolated and all alone in private cells. They were not allowed to read any newspapers or watch TV or listen to radio or talk to one another.

They were literally all alone.

One of them was Kathryn Koob who grew up in a Lutheran church in Iowa. When she was finally released some 13 months later she was asked how she endured the loneliness. She said

she recited to herself the Bible passages from God's Word that she had memorized in Lutheran confirmation class.

She knew the meaning of Psalm 73:24-25 "You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory."

Whom have I in heaven but You? And being with You, I desire nothing on earth."

Life can be a dark journey.

- Especially when we are ill
- Especially when we may lose a loved one
- Especially when we may lose a job

In those times may we read Psalm 73:24-26.

"The future is dark to us, but lighted up by the one hope that the end of our earthly existence will be a glorious solution of the riddle. Some of God's choicest deliveries come through the back doors of our lives."

Remember what God has done for us.

Paul says: "Those God predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified." Ro 8:29ff

Now, there are times when we may put ourselves in a lonely place because we have failed to confess our sins. This happened to King David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. Rather than confess his sin David spent a whole year living with his sin.

He writes about how this unconfessed sin brought him loneliness and sapped his strength to live in Psalm 32:3ff "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of the summer."

But David saw his loneliness melt away when he confessed his sin: "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity...you forgave the guilt of my sin...Rejoice in the Lord and be glad." Psalm 32:5, 11

II. Rejoice that Jesus had made it possible for us never, never to be lonely

A. We do not need to fear being alone

1. Jesus was misunderstood. Few knew what Jesus was doing on the cross at the time.

* But Jesus stayed on the cross for us

* He was led by the will of His Father and love for us

“Jesus drank the full cup of God’s wrath upon sin....

- That all the sins of men and women were placed upon Him
- That Christ became all the thieves, murderers and adulterers in one
- That God treated Christ as if He had been a great sinner
- Surely it was that horror which made Jesus sweat great drops when He saw and felt that God the Father was beginning to treat Him as if He had been a sinner in the Garden of Gethsemane
- The holy soul of Christ shrank with deepest agony from the slightest contact with sin
- He began to be made a curse for us”

Jesus experienced ultimate loneliness for us.

2. How do we handle loneliness?

Do we think....

- God really doesn’t know what is going on with us?
- People have forgotten about us, maybe even God
- Great believers of the past knew all about loneliness....
 - Joseph spent 2 years in prison - Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness
 - Elijah spent time in hunger during a famine
 - John the Baptist grew up in the wilderness
 - Apostle John was exiled to an island - Apostle Paul was in jail off and on
 - Martin Luther spent 1 year alone in the Wartburg castle hiding from his enemies

Times alone are times to look into God’s Word to know and feel God’s support and presence.

- Psalm 73:26
- II Corinthians 4:8-9 **“We are hard pressed on every side** but not crushed perplexed but not in despair persecuted but not abandoned struck down but not destroyed.”

God remains the Rock of my heart and flesh.

B. Jesus suffered loneliness so that we might never have to

1. He went to the cross alone

2. He experienced being forsaken by God Psalm 73:27

3. Jesus was rejected by the Father so that you and I would never be rejected by Him

4. Asaph - "But as for me, it is good to be near God" v28

Hebrews 13:5 "Be content with what you have, because God has said, Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."

Jesus attends to you and me through the valley of the shadow of death so that we fear no evil, for we are not alone, He is with us, His rod and His staff will comfort us.

Once a certain believer suffered one loss after another. One night he had a dream. He was walking with the Lord. The Lord took him back in his life and showed him there were always 2 sets of footprints in the sand as he was walking through life. – his own and the Lord's.

Then, he noticed part of his life's journey --- the rugged spots ---had only 1 set of footprints. The man asked God: "We walked together most of the time, but when things were bad for me ---- Where were you? I only see 1 set of footprints."

The Lord replied: "I never left you. During the tough times I carried you in my arms. The single set of footprints you see are Mine. That was when I was carrying you in my arms."

Never will I leave you or forsake you.

Asaph concluded: "I have made the Sovereign Lord my Refuge...it is good to be near God."

A spotless Savior stands in the place of guilty sinners so that we will never be alone. He stood in our place that we might stand in His place of righteousness and glory.