

Weekly Devotion

Lay Your Burdens Down!

Find Rest in Jesus' with facing loneliness. – Devotion 2/3

^{1Th 4:13} Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ^{1Th 4:14} We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.— 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Dear friends and family of True North and St. John's,

For some, it's an all too familiar feeling. Your friends are out having a good time, but for whatever reason, you're stuck staying in for the evening. Whether it's because you didn't get invited or because you have too much work to do, you get left behind. One of the worst parts about staying in is how lonely you feel. There's no one there to listen to you; it seems no one cares you didn't want to spend the evening by yourself. Maybe you even feel like no one can possibly understand what you're going through because no one else has faced loneliness the same way you have. Being left out hurts.

The Christians in Thessalonica also felt left out, but their loneliness wore a different mask. Their loved ones had left them behind on earth. Death leaves in its wake its own kind of loneliness, one that's painful because of how permanent it is. If you've ever lost someone close to you, you know how it hurts. It seems like the Thessalonians didn't have down clearly God's word to us about heaven, though. That loneliness is terrible because there's no hope of it ending.

The Thessalonians maybe wanted to ask some of the same questions you do when you're lonely. *Where is God when I'm alone? How can a loving God allow such terrible pain to come into my life? Why me?* Asking these questions show our priorities are out of line with God's. When we feel alone, all too often we lash out at God. We look into ourselves and focus on what we need rather than all the good God has promised us. Our selfishness—even when we're alone or ignorant to our self-centered attitude—doesn't give us a license to grieve God.

Instead, God grieves at the damage loneliness causes in our lives. He comes to the lonely and bears it with them. He came down to earth and suffered the pains of loneliness. He experienced loneliness after the loss of a dear friend. He knew what it was like, not just to be left out of a party, but to be the butt of everyone's jokes at the party too. The loneliness he faced was truly unique because he alone bore the weight of the world—all our sins—on the cross. There he endured extreme loneliness. His disciples had fled the scene. His own people

condemned him to death. His executioners made him into a joke. His family stood by helpless. His own Father couldn't bear to look at him because our sins were too great. He knew what it's like to be lonely during his time on earth so that he could take your sins away. So that he could be with you in your loneliness.

He told the Thessalonians that the loneliness of loss is only temporary. Although it feels so permanent now, God will raise us to be with those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. So even our grief is filled with hope. The separation of death will not keep us separate forever. Jesus made sure of that.

He also knows what you're going through when you feel lonely. It's not just that he's been there, but that he is right there with you. He has a larger purpose in mind, even though we can't see it. He promises us there's hope because he died and rose again. In heaven, we will not be lonely. God will unite us with all those who have fallen asleep in him. Even greater, then we will be with Jesus himself. He knows loneliness, and he knows you. So lay your burden down on him.

For comfort about the Lord's return, read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11. The Lord's blessings on your week!

In Christ,
Vicar Ewings

This devotion series is based upon Matthew 11:28-30 which says, ^{Mt 11:28} "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ^{Mt 11:29} Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ^{Mt 11:30} For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."– Matthew 11:28-30