

Hope For Troubled Hearts

John 14:1-3

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:1-3 (NIV)

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Things can happen slowly but surely. Things can also happen suddenly, quickly and swiftly. But no matter how they happen, the things that trouble us most are the things that happen unexpectedly.

Life is full of the unexpected, the unfathomable, and the unexplained. Today, family and friends may be asking, “How could this happen so quickly?” Just as we were about to celebrate another time of joy at Christmas, we discovered we facing perhaps the greatest grief of our lives. After all, who could have guessed that in just a few short weeks—less than 1000 hours—Dan’s life and our lives would change so, so much.

And, unfortunately, to borrow Robert Frost’s phraseology, “there’s miles to go” before *this* grief is done.

Grief is a funny thing. It hits us in ways we don’t—and can’t—anticipate. Sometimes we’ll weep when we least expect it. Other times, something will jog our memory and we’ll think, “Yes, I remember when that happened.”

I’m not a die-hard country music person, I do appreciate fine music of any genre. One of my favorite country songs is one by country music artist, Alan Jackson. It’s called, “*Remember When.*”

“Remember When”

Remember when I was young and so were you
And time stood still and love was all we knew
You were the first, so was I
We made love and then you cried
Remember when

Remember when we vowed the vows
and walked the walk
gave our hearts, made the start, it was hard
We lived and learned, life threw curves
There was joy, there was hurt
Remember when

Remember when old ones died and new were born
And life was changed, disassembled, rearranged
We came together, fell apart

And broke each other's hearts
Remember when

Remember when the sound of little feet
was the music
We danced to week to week
Brought back the love, we found trust
Vowed we'd never give it up
Remember when

Remember when thirty seemed so old
Now lookin' back, it's just a steppin' stone
To where we are,
where we've been
Said we'd do it all again
Remember when

Remember when we said when we turned gray
When the children grow up and move away
We won't be sad, we'll be glad
For all the life we've had
And we'll remember when

Remember when
Remember when

In the next weeks, months and years, there's going to be a lot of "Remember When" times. True to the nature of grief, the ones who loved most will grieve most.

Even as it should be. And, when the tears start, that's perhaps the most important time to remember the words of Jesus to His disciples as He prepared to die on the cross for us.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."
John 14:1-3 (NIV)

"Do not let your hearts be troubled." The word for "troubled" in the original means "to be in a stormy state." It's used of the sudden storms which commonly came up unexpectedly on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus' favorite fishing spot. Such sudden storms can also come up on smaller lakes in our own area.

The word for "troubled" also means "to be terrified, disturbed, and upset." In this case the disciples were disturbed, upset and terrified when they heard Jesus mention the unmentionable: that they would be separated from their Lord. Separation from their Lord is the greatest grief.

In my experience with grief, I have found the following to be true.

“Those who grieve their parents, grieve their past. Those who grieve their spouse or sibling, grieve the present. Those who grieve their children, grieve their future.”

Our loved one’s parents, his wife, his brothers and sisters, and his children and grandchildren will all grieve. But for each of them, their grieving will be different. Why? Because he was something unique to each of them. It will be different because he loved each of them in a unique way, even as each of them loved him in an unique way.

But, what Jesus offers to all of them—and us—is hope. Listen to Jesus’ words again.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”
John 14:1-3 (NIV)

“Don’t let your hearts be troubled.” That’s what Jesus told His disciples. And what He really meant was not, “Stop being troubled.” But what He really said was, “Don’t even begin to be troubled.”

How, in light of this great loss, can we not be troubled? How can it be that we not even begin to be troubled? Because of Jesus’ promise, “I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

The reason the disciples were so troubled when Jesus said these words is because they thought Jesus was going to leave them. They thought that He was abandoning them. They were wondering “How can Jesus possibly desert us and leave us to cry helplessly...all by ourselves in our loneliness?”

Perhaps we might be asking the same thing today. But Jesus’ answer to His disciples is the same that He gives to us today.

“I will come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am.” John 14:3 (NIV)

And how can we be sure Jesus is with us? Because He loves us. Because He cares. That’s why Christians observe Lent every year. It’s a forty-day-long reflection of Jesus’ great love for us. And it’s a time for us to remember that the full extent of Jesus’ love for us is shown by how He died on the cross for you and me, so that our sins—all of our sins—might be forgiven.

Does Jesus care? Oh, yes, He certainly does! He cared for and loved Dan even at the point of death. And He loves and cares for us who grieve today.

An article printed in a southern newspaper (c. 2001) reported a story about an atheist couple who had a child. The couple never told their daughter anything about the Lord. One night when the little girl was 5 years old, the parents fought with each other and the dad shot the Mom, right in front of the child. Then, the dad shot himself. The little girl watched it all.

The five year old was sent to a foster home. The foster mother was a Christian and took the child to church. On the first day of Sunday School, the foster mother told the teacher that the girl had never heard of Jesus, and to have patience with her.

The teacher began the class. Then she held up a picture of Jesus and said, "Does anyone know who this is?"

The little girl said, "I do, that's the man who was holding me the night my parents died."

If you are wondering, "Where was God when I needed Him" you can talk to this little girl. She knew that God was there. She knew—as we do today—that Jesus cares.

I'd like to conclude with one of my favorite hymns. It's called, "*Does Jesus Care?*"

“Does Jesus Care?”

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth or song,
As the burdens press, and the cares distress
And the way grows weary and long?

Does Jesus care when my way is dark
With a nameless dread and fear?
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,
Does He care enough to be near?

Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed
To resist some temptation strong;
When for my deep grief there is no relief,
Though my tears flow all the night long?

Does Jesus care when I've said "goodbye"
To the dearest on earth to me,
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

Refrain

Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.

Frank E. Graeff

Yes, Jesus does care. Let not your hearts be troubled...for He cares for you. Amen.

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