

GRIEVING CHANGE

As soon as Jesus heard the news, He left in a boat to a remote area to be alone (Matthew 14: 13).

In a normal year much of my grief right now would have to do with the Toronto Maple Leafs having gone another year without winning the Stanley Cup. This has been no normal year for any of us as a result of COVID-19. Throughout the past four months I have found myself grieving at times as a result of the many changes brought on by the pandemic:

- As I mentioned in an earlier mid-week message, I have grieved at times for the losses my daughter has experienced with a cancelled basketball season, no class year-end trip and a delayed Grade 8 graduation.
- I am grieving the fact that we can't get away this summer for a vacation that we look forward to each year.
- I grieve when I hear that certain stores are closing as a result of COVID-19 and begin to think of all their employees without work.
- I grieved recently for a family I did a funeral for feeling guilty that they couldn't have more people to celebrate their mom's life.
- I grieved after our recent session meeting knowing that when we do reopen some of you may not be able to return until a later date.

This pandemic has brought about so many changes and as a result caused us to experience losses in our lives. It is natural for us to grieve whenever we experience loss in our lives. It is important for us to acknowledge our grief in these moments. Jesus did when He experienced losses in His life.

When Jesus heard the news that John the Baptist had been killed, He took the loss hard. John the Baptist not only prepared the way for Jesus to begin His public ministry, but he was one of the few people who knew His true identity as the Son of God. In Matthew 14: 13 we are told that after hearing the news Jesus found a remote area to be alone in order to deal with His grief. Jesus was not totally alone in this moment dealing with His grief. In these moments of solitude, Jesus would have been praying to His FATHER IN HEAVEN, expressing His sorrow, acknowledging His pain and seeking strength and comfort in the

moment. We are not told exactly how long Jesus got to spend in solitude with the Father dealing with His grief before the crowds arrived. What is interesting to take notice of is that when the crowds did arrive, even as He was still grieving, Jesus had compassion on them and healed the sick. Later that evening, Jesus fed the crowd miraculously with five loaves and two fish.

Grief can cause some people to give up. Other people stop living and stop moving forward as a result of loss and grief. Still others become angry and bitter as a result of their losses. And still others deny their feelings of grief.

People who feel any of these ways have not dealt properly with their grief. Grief must be acknowledged just as Jesus did with His. We must also work at overcoming our grief too. Jesus sets a wonderful example for us in how to do this:

- 1) First, spend time alone in solitude with our Heavenly Father and express our true feelings to Him just like Jesus did.
- 2) Second, let our Heavenly Father put peace back into our hearts during this time of grief (remember how the Father filled Jesus' grieving heart with compassion).
- 3) Third, keep ministering and serving as Jesus did even after the loss of John the Baptist.

Our losses may be different in nature during COVID-19 than the grief associated with the death of a loved one like in the case of John the Baptist. But loss is still loss no matter what the loss is that we are experiencing. We have all experienced grief during these past four months and there is more to come as we see more changes until a vaccine is discovered. Each time we find ourselves grieving as a result of one of these changes, let's make sure we follow Jesus' example:

- 1) Acknowledge that we are grieving,
- 2) Spend time in prayer with our Heavenly Father,
- 3) Open our hearts to be filled with hope and peace again,
- 4) Keep serving God in the ways He has called us.

By following these steps, we still may find ourselves sad at times, grieving our losses, but at least we will be dealing with our grief in a

Christ-like way. We will also know that our same Saviour who knows and has experienced grief will be there to help us overcome our loss.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Blessed we are to have a Saviour to help us deal with the losses and grief we are going through in this pandemic. Take full advantage of this blessing we are being provided.

God Bless & Keep Safe.

Pastor Dean