

Sermon Series: “Comfort for tough times”—Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Westfield, IN—2/16/03

Title: “Encouragement for lonely times”

Text: 2 Timothy 4: 6-18

Intro: Ills. Wrong Number

Theme: When we appear to be abandoned by all those around us whom we had counted on, we can also find comfort, hope, and the strength to move on in Jesus, our Savior, who will never leave or forsake us.

Identify the spiritual depression of loneliness when it settles upon your life

- Accept the fact that bad things happen to **righteous people (Print and read vss. 6-8)**
 1. Living in a sin-fallen world of trials makes us appreciate all the more the life that is up ahead
 1. “*Strengthen the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and say to them, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22*
 2. Thank God it is not what we do/don’t do but our righteousness by faith in Christ that locks in our relationship w/God
 3. It may be that “**season**” of your life, through which God is leading you, as a time for a witness to his glory (vs. 6-8)
- Spiritual low pressures often blow into your life and exacerbate the loneliness (**Print and read vss. 9-16**)
 4. The tyranny of the urgent (vs. 9)
 5. Betrayal by a trusted friend or loved one (vs. 10a)
 6. False expectations fostered by a **prosperity Christianity theology** (vs. 10b-12)
 1. Is what God is presently giving me “good enough?” (*Only Luke is with me.* vs. 11a)
 2. “*And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*” Philip. 4:19
 3. Not overlooking the blessings of companionship already at hand (“*Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.*” vs. 11b)
 4. Finding joy in the “simple things” of life which God is providing (vs.13)
 5. **Ills.: a little child’s imaginary play friends**
 7. The intentional persecution of a few which make us paranoid of the many (vs. 14-16)
 1. We make false assumptions of others’ loyalties by presuming a premeditated conspiracy
 2. We isolate ourselves and then wonder why we feel so all alone

Spiritual remedies for all-alone times (Print and read vss. 16-18)

- Remember to forgive and forget others’ past sins to combat loneliness
 1. Paul follows pattern of Jesus and Stephen by letting the sin and the hurt go to God (vs. 16b—*wish optative-prayer*)
 2. “*Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.*” Col.3:13-15
- Recall that you are never alone (vs. 17a)
 3. “*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” Matt 28: 20
 4. “*Be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” Heb 13:5*
 5. **Ills.: The Father Never Leaves Us**
 6. Jesus suffered all our eternal “aloneness” on the cross so that from that time forward we never again would have to
- Realign yourself to a “**purpose-driven lives in Jesus**” (vs. 17b)
 7. Paul refocused on what Jesus had for him to do (“*in order that*”)
 1. Proclaim the good news so that he and others might hear and would be fed
 2. As “gentiles” heard, many more would come into a relationship with Jesus and him and give him more “family”
 8. Purpose-driven lives by their very nature are outward focused diminishing navel gazing which depresses us
 1. You will be less prone to bouts of desolation
 2. **Ills.** “You will invest your life in something, or you will throw it away on nothing.” Citation: Haddon Robinson
- Rejoice in your victory over loneliness which is already yours (vs. 18)
 9. Paul was so certain of his deliverance from this battle over isolation because he knew Jesus had already won the war
 10. With a hope grounded in the resurrection and a focus firmly placed in heaven, we reject the dejection of human loneliness and praise Jesus who is with us forever and ever.

Wrong Number

The telephone rings, and the young mother, at the end of her day and her rope, answers.

"Honey, it's mom. I called because I know that you're busy with the three children, and I want to give you some help. I'm going to stop by to clean the house, take care of the baby, and prepare dinner for when the boys get home from school. I want you to get ready to go to my beautician, I paid her already, she is going to give you "the works," your appointment is at 1:00. Give George a call at the office and tell him that you will meet him at Chez Jays for dinner, on me..."*The young mother suddenly interrupts and asks "George, who is George?"* "Your husband." says the caller. *"My husbands name is Fred."* She replies. "Is this 555-3212?" *"No this is 555-2212"* "I'm sorry I have the wrong number." says the now embarrassed caller. *After a pause, the young mother sheepishly asks, "Does this mean that you're not coming over?"*

Father Never Leaves Us

One tribe of native Americans had a unique practice for training young braves. On the night of a boy's thirteenth birthday, he was placed in a dense forest to spend the entire night alone. Until then he had never been away from the security of his family and tribe. But on this night he was blindfolded and taken miles away. When he took off the blindfold, he was in the middle of thick woods. By himself. All night long. Every time a twig snapped, he probably visualized a wild animal ready to pounce. Every time an animal howled, he imagined a wolf leaping out of the darkness. Every time the wind blew, he wondered what more sinister sound it masked. No doubt it was a terrifying night for many. After what seemed like an eternity, the first rays of sunlight entered the interior of the forest. Looking around, the boy saw flowers, trees, and the outline of the path. Then, to his utter astonishment, he beheld the figure of a man standing just a few feet away, armed with a bow and arrow. It was the boy's father. He had been there all night long. Can you think of any better way for a child to learn how God allows us to face the tests of life? God is always present with us. God's presence is unseen, but it is more real than life itself.

2 Tim. 4:6-18

⁶For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

⁹Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹²I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. ¹⁴Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. ¹⁶At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.

¹⁷But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. [NIV]