

Sermon Series: “Christ at the Crossroads”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—2/6/05

Title: “Christ at the Crossroads of Loneliness”

Text: 2 Timothy 4: 9-18

Intro.: *Ills.: High-tech Ghost and At the Crossroads*

Theme: At crucial moments of loneliness in our lives we are at a crossroad in which we can destructively react or in which we can respond from our security in Christ which will lead us to new beginnings.

The stew of loneliness

- Discern what is causing you to be lonely
 1. Paul gives us an unusual glimpse into his personal psyche, emotions, and loneliness at a traumatic time in his life
 1. We can hear his desperation (*come quickly. . .bring the cloak. . . and my scrolls*)
 2. Paul senses his impending martyrdom(*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. 2 Tim.4:6-7*)
 2. Life’s traumas are compounded when we allow disappointment in others’ indifference or shortcomings to rule the day
 1. Friends and family **AWOL** in times of our greatest needs (**read vs. 10**)
 2. When good enough is not good enough (*only Luke is with me...get Mark. vs. 11*)
 3. When we isolate ourselves from friends and fellow believers (*I sent Tycius to Ephesus...vs. 12*)
 1. **Ills.: Took the Sign Down**
 4. Intentional malice from others (*Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. vs. 14*)
- A word of caution to reacting rather than responding to loneliness
 3. Don’t envision ghosts where there **may be** none (*You too should be on your guard against him. vs. 15*)
 4. Don’t create enemies where there **are** none. (*At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. vs. 16*)
 5. Don’t rely on anyone else but the Lord (*But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength. vs 17*)
 1. **Ills.: “I am a rock, I am an Island . . .” faulty theology**
 2. It is not stubborn isolationism but rather confident spiritual security in Christ who becomes your identity

When all that you have left is Jesus . . .

- Focusing on what you have at your disposal from the Lord to address your loneliness
 6. *Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. Phil4:8*
 7. Sometimes we are so focused on the pain **of** the loneliness, we don’t see what God is doing **with** that loneliness
 1. So that Christ might be formed in us (*My children, I am again in labor with you that Christ is formed in you. Gal. 4:19*)
 2. A purpose in us and through us (*so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed vs. 17*)
- Focusing on deliverance rather than justice
 8. Turn the wicked over to God’s justice
 1. Of Alexander Paul consoles himself/not wishes for– *The Lord will repay him for what he has done. vs. 14*
 2. *And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Jude 22-23*
 9. Turn the offending believer over to God’s mercy
 1. *May it not be held against them. v16*
 2. Live in constant forgiveness of fellow sinners around you
 3. Pray for God’s mercy in areas in which they may have abandoned you
 4. Act as fellow heirs of God’s grace (*For through Christ we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. Eph.2: 18*)
 10. Turn your loneliness over to God’s empowering deliverance

1. *The 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. vs. 18*
2. **Ills.: Todd Roeske response to “the Lord be with you” — “the Lord is with me! I am never alone!”**

High-tech Ghost

One November day in 2002, Jim Sulkers, a 53-year-old retired municipal worker from Winnipeg (Manitoba, Canada), climbed into bed, pulled the covers up, and died. Nearly two years later, on August 25, 2004, police who had been called by concerned relatives entered Sulkers' apartment and found his body in a mummified state. Everything else in his tidy one-bedroom apartment was intact, although the food in his fridge was spoiled and his wall calendar was two years out of date. Mr. Sulkers' death went undiscovered for several reasons: he was reclusive, estranged from family members, and had a medical condition that prevented his body from decomposing and emitting odors. In addition, automatic banking deposited his disability pension and withdrew utilities and other expenses as they came due. Terence Moran, who along with Neil Postman co-founded the Media Ecology program at New York University, said, "For many practical purposes, this man was virtually alive throughout that time. This man's life was extended for two years by the technology he used. Postman would have said that what you have here is a lack of community." *Citation:* Lianne George, "A High-Tech Ghost Story," *MacLean's* (9-20-04); submitted by Daren Wride, Lake Country, British Columbia, Ca

At the Crossroads

Bishop Walpole, the father of Hugh Walpole, the novelist, once said to a friend who was weighing a [life] call: "If you are uncertain of which of the two paths to take, choose the one on which the shadow of the cross falls." *Citation:* **Rupert Hart-Davis in Hugh Walpole, A Biography. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 31, no. 18.**

Took the Sign Down

After a friend of ours took his first rural pastorate, we made plans to visit him. We wrote down careful directions on how to get to his country church. He said there would be a welcome sign at a crossroads that would indicate to us where to turn. But traveling back and forth on the road, we couldn't find the sign. Finally, by accident we located the church. When we told our pastor friend about our trouble, he was confused. He asked the church trustee what happened to the sign. The trustee explained, "I took it down for the winter, so it wouldn't become weathered." *Citation:* **JoHannah Reardon, Sycamore, Illinois**

I Am a Rock by Paul Simon (1965)

A winter's day, in a deep and dark December; I am alone, gazing from my window to the streets below On a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow. I Am A Rock, I am an island. I've built walls, a fortress deep and mighty, that none may penetrate. I have no need of friendship; Friendship causes pain. It's laughter and it's loving I disdain. I Am A Rock, I am an island. Don't talk of love, but I've heard the words before; It's sleeping in my memory. I won't disturb the slumber of feelings That have died. If I never loved I never would have cried. I Am A Rock, I am an island.

I have my books, and my poetry to protect me; I am shielded in my armor, hiding in my room, save within my womb. I touched no one and no one touches me. I Am A Rock, I am an island. And a rock feels no pain; And an island never cries! by Franz Felix - Austria/Vienna

2 Tim. 4:9-21

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.