

The Pain of Loss

Christians should not hesitate to cry. Our Lord wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus. We too find ourselves in tears at the pain of our loss. But we do not sorrow in the same way as those who have no hope. Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep (1 THESS. 4:14). We look forward to a grand reunion with loved ones who have died in faith. Still, we miss them. The separation can seem overwhelming at times. This pain is part and parcel of grieving; it is to be understood, not resisted.

Grieving for most people is a journey. It is a journey from the initial pain of parting toward healing and reconciliation with our loss. The pain gradually subsides, but the loss remains. Grief has many dimensions and may seem unpredictable in its ebb and flow; yet in Christ we find strength along the way. For in this journey we are not alone.

Christians find that family and friends are God's gifts to help them bear the pain of loss, which at times seems unbearable. Such company is important in dealing constructively with grief. It must be consciously sought out by those who mourn. Most who mourn find it very helpful to tell the story of the death of those they love to family and to trusted friends. The repeated

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narrating of that story brings release and insight into the joy and sorrow of the parting. Friends and family will want to lend a listening ear and heart for such telling and retelling; it is a rare privilege to be entrusted with such treasures. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (GAL. 6:2).

Above all, Christian mourners will turn to the worship fellowship of the church and the rich comfort of God's holy Word and Sacrament for healing along the path of grief. For Jesus Christ abides within His Church through His sacred means of grace. Through these channels He bestows the riches of His forgiveness, life and salvation now and to all eternity. One day we, too, shall stand with that great multitude of heaven who hear these blessed words: "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (REV. 21:3-4). LW

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