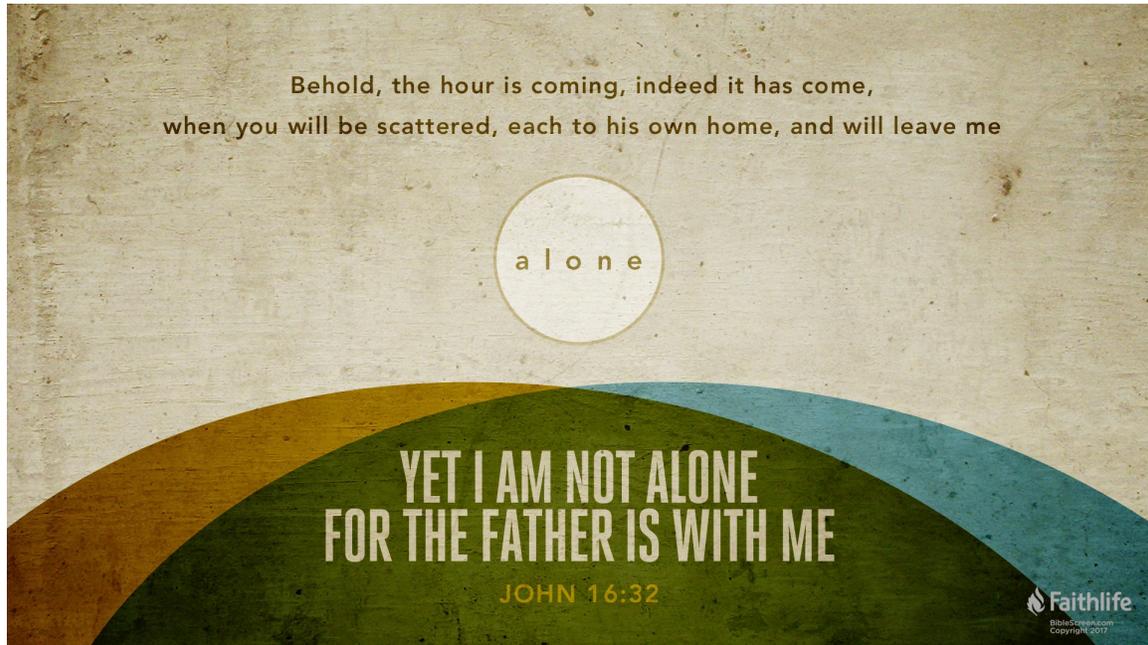


Wednesday, May 6, 2020

Turn off the outside "noise" for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God's Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.



— PART 1 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

Yesterday we thought about our **tears**, and the extraordinary reality that Jesus **col-lects** our tears, and **enters** into our tears. "Jesus wept"! Today I would like us to think about our **loneliness**, which can begin to wear at our souls after weeks and weeks of social distancing. I'm calling this encouragement:

ALONE, BUT NOT LONELY

JOHN 16:32 (NIV)

**"A time is coming and in fact has come
when you will be scattered,
each to your own home.
You will leave me all alone.
Yet I am not alone,
for my Father is with me.**

Here is the setting for this remarkable statement. Jesus has announced to his disciples that he is going to be killed, and after that **"In a little while you will see me no**

more.” That had to be horrifying to hear! Even more painfully, he tells them that during this process **“You will be scattered...you will leave me all alone.”** I think the enormity of what he is trying to explain to them is beyond their capacity to absorb and understand. I’m sure it would be beyond our minds if we were present at that moment. But he then adds something vitally important that can speak to you and I today. He says **“You will leave me all alone”** — but then qualifies that statement by saying **“Yet I am NOT alone, for my Father is with me.”**

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There is a stark difference between being **alone** and being **lonely**. Jesus, our empathetic King, understands the difference...so he can help us navigate it. He understands that all his earthly friends are going to abandon him at the hour of his greatest need — so that, based on what he can **see** with his eyes he will be left all alone. But he also understands that **there is a reality that transcends sight**, so that **by faith** he can say with confidence **“Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.”**

There are times when you and I “feel” alone; times when we look around and realize “I am completely alone.” Yet we walk by faith, not sight. So at those moments, we take comfort in the promise of God that he is our Yahweh Shammah, “The God Who is Present”; that our Lord is “an ever-present help at time of need”; that Jesus is Emmanuel, “God is With Us”; and that he has promised “Look, I am with you **always**, even to the end of the age.” That’s why Dallas Willard calls God “the ‘With-Us’ God”!

It is that kind of confidence that helps us when we feel isolated and alone, when we sense loneliness begin to overwhelm us or paralyze us — we can stop and distinguish between what we **see** and what we **know**. Yes, it’s true, at that moment there is no human presence to comfort and encourage us . . . and yet, with Jesus we can say in faith, **“Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.”**

*Ever-Present Father, transform our **loneliness** (feeling isolated, abandoned, or alone) into **solitude** (a time of being apart from people, but present with the Lord). Loneliness is oppressive; but solitude can be a gift. Help us learn to welcome it.*

Pastor Doug

