11-12-21

Here’s Hope

By Rev. Jerry Rea

Into Our Darkness

Sometimes life is dark. It often happens out of our own making, but sometimes it’s not like that. There are people who are right now suffering through cancer. The treatments that will make patients better are actually often worse than the disease. If you are the parent or a family member of someone suffering like this, your loved one’s problem quickly becomes your problem. Lord help the spouse or the child or the parent of a person suffering from disease. It is dark.

Death is dark. We pretty it up by reminding loved ones that their family member is in a “better place.” While that is true it rings so hollow. This sentiment will not comfort the heart that now has to live alone. That is poor comfort for the one whose real love is gone. So many can really say that their spouse or friend was the only one who really loved and understood them. What do you do when that person is no longer at the supper table? What are you supposed to do when you can’t call them, or text them, or touch them?

What about the darkness of depression? I’ve talked to any number of medical professionals who assure me that many, many struggle regularly with this darkness. It really doesn’t matter if it’s chemical or psychological, it still feels heavy and relentless and... Dark. It is like a cloud that will not lift. It is like a huge weight that sits on you, with no end in sight. Medicines often help, but then you can be tethered to a bottle, almost afraid to let it go. We become afraid (and even live that way) knowing that the monster is there, always there.

Some struggle in the darkness of violence. Abuse and the lifestyle of the abused are tremendous problems. Kids run away from home. Wives leave a husband, finally discovering that it’s okay to go. The ghosts of an abusive childhood haunt many for a lifetime. We see in a real way the problems of guns today, but violence does not start or stop with the quandary of guns. Imagine you are a young person for whom a good day is one in which you’re not beaten, or sexually used. Imagine the fear of such a home and the numbness of “learning to live with it.”

Fear is also dark. Fears come in all shapes and sizes, and almost everyone has his or her own demons. It can be as simple as fear of tomorrow or the future. We can learn fears from parents, or we can develop them all on our own. Some are petrified of being alone. Some are paralyzed by past failures. They are so consumed with their past that their future is a dark wall of impossibilities. Television fears are made to be real. Most of us, though, do not need the TV to make up fears; we can do that all by ourselves.

There is a side of human beings that is dark. Sometimes we see people being ugly and mean. Sometimes we get to see our most cherished leaders do the most un-christian things. There are people that when placed in a situation that stretches them, choose the bad and not the good. Most of us have a bad side. Most of us hide our respective... darkness.

Into this dark world steps Jesus. Do you think He did not know what life here is like? Do you think He was blind to the problems of the “real” world? Do you think He somehow imagined that He would be able to live above our fears? Here He comes, into our darkness. He does not ride above our problems like some sort of genie on a magic carpet, He embraces our reality. He lived within our political systems. He felt the pain of hurting and bleeding (like the suffering of the cross). He experienced the pain of unkind words and rejection. He knew what it was like to be alone. He loved all, but few just loved Him back. There were many who wanted to use Him. There were many who misunderstood Him. There were close disciples who deserted and betrayed Him. He knew all that, and yet He stepped into this darkness. Into this world He brought light. Not only that, Jesus made us light. “You are the light of the world.” He brought the potential of light, into our darkness. He brought the reality of light into our darkness.

I love you,

Jerry Rea