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Hopeless Souls Cry Out
by Rev. Jerry Rea

Here's a quote for you. *"During the dark days of Civil War I was often driven to prayer because I knew I had nowhere else to go."* Those are the words of Abraham Lincoln. If you listen closely you'll become aware that his hopelessness caused him to call out to God, in "hopes" that God would do something. How many have found God when days are rosy? Isn't it usually the case that dire sickness, distress, even the woes of death cause us to think again and pray? Those who came to Jesus in Scripture usually came out of grievous need. Think about that father whose son was possessed with a demon. Blind Bartimaeus knew Jesus was passing by and would not quit calling out until Jesus healed him. Lepers sought Him. Peter recounted the idea that He (only) had the words of life (John 6). We hear the pain of the heart of Pilate as he interviews Jesus prior to his verdict. There is a plaintiff "what is truth?"

When lives crash we turn to Jesus. In my own experience there is riveted in my mind a trip to the hospital. His name was John and he lived a lifestyle chained to drink. His slavery led him to a hospital bed, and I visited with a singular purpose. My goal was to confront John with Jesus while he was "dry." The visit went well. I can still hear his pain when he fairly shouted "Jesus save me!" The tone and words combined to communicate to a young pastor that he'd tried again and again to find a way out of the prison that drink had built. He'd have never cried out to Jesus, if he were not desperate. Countless fathers and mothers have asked me to cry out with them for a lost child. There are times you feel the cold grip of death so that prayers are ugly at best. We see and know in desperate fashion we are hopeless to save those we love and even ourselves. A mother asked me to pray for her calloused son who'd just moved to Washington State. He was too far away to "mother" and too hard to listen even when he lived close to home. We could only pray that God would send new friends that would help to shepherd him home. On the edge of death we cry out. Life is never so precious as when it's almost gone. We see it ending and cry out to the only one who can really do anything. Having sought doctors we realize that they are not gods. We begin to understand their value on the one hand, but their limits on the other.

Hopelessness often leads people to find Jesus. It is so painful and full of misery that we'd not wish it on anyone. A person who loses hope has lost something! Hope does spring eternal from way down deep. When hope is missing then you have a real problem, way down deep. To be hopeless is to be empty. It almost certainly leads to depression because that may be the most normal reaction to hopelessness. Many through hopelessness have turned to false religions. Many have sought help in the stars, finding a glimmer of hope in astrology. Today we seek aid in science. It is almost our "go to" place. Science has answers, yes, but science also has questions. The same "cure" that one finds, will not heal/ mend another. Scientists don't agree on their "answers." So many find solace in education. We feel if we just "know" or "understand" something, then we'd find comfort. No amount of knowledge nor science can explain or mend a heart that looks into a grave where their most precious possession lies. Just

because you “understand” why you feel the way you do, this knowledge does not heal the brokenness that plagues you. There is the hopelessness of sin. Sin always ends in death. That’s why Paul said the “wages” of sin is death. The death continues long after the pleasure of sin. That wound cannot be made right until we experience forgiveness. Forgiveness, however, can be elusive. It is not readily given away by many people. Its promise seems impossible to lay hold on. So, we cry out to God. He forgives. He heals our brokenness. He shows the way home. Our hopelessness has led to hope.

I love you,
Jerry Rea