

Loneliness

by Carter Conlon

Loneliness is a common experience that can be overcome through a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 38:45

Scripture: Psalm 102:1

Topics: "Emotional Healing", "Gods Comfort"

Description

This sermon delves into the topic of loneliness, exploring the common experience of feeling isolated and forgotten. It emphasizes the need to put loneliness to work in the kingdom of God by reaching out to others with compassion and understanding. The message highlights how God shares in our loneliness and longs for all people to come back to Him, revealing a deeper purpose behind our feelings of isolation.

Transcript

Lord only gave me one message all summer. Number one for me, he said, I want you to rest. And it has really been a very, very restful time.

They only gave me one message and it's simply called loneliness. And I know that it's a deep word today and it's going to minister to you. Psalm 102, please, if you turn there.

Psalm 102, be talking this morning about loneliness. Now, father, I thank you for the anointing. Oh God almighty, I thank you more than anything that you have chosen to abide here in this house that you've called by your name.

And you've given all of us strength that we don't naturally have. And you've given us wisdom that is not our own. Everything we have, all that we do, how we receive, how we speak, how we sing has all come from your hand.

And all we can do is bring it back to you with grateful hearts and say, thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for going to a cross for us. Oh God, help us now to live for you. Give us understanding.

Take us, Lord, into a place of strength. Deliver us from weakness, Lord. Bring us into spiritual strength.

Help us to take on some meat and to not be afraid of the deeper truths in your word. We thank you for it, God. Thank you for the simplicity of your word.

Every man can understand it for himself. We thank you for this in Jesus' mighty name. Psalm 102, beginning at verse one, speaking about loneliness.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble. Incline thine ear unto me.

In the day when I call, answer me speedily. For my days are consumed like smoke and my bones are burned as a hearth. My heart is smitten and withers like grass so that I forget to eat my bread.

By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. I'm like a pelican of the wilderness. I'm like an owl of the desert.

I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop. I don't know what particular difficulty this psalmist was in at the time of writing this, which is really a song of worship. But in this psalm is found a common experience, a common difficulty that you face and I face, all of us face it.

Seasons, at certain seasons, it might be more intense than others, but there is something about this that I want you to see today. Verse seven, he says, I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon a housetop. Now the writer's saying, I live in a place of revelation.

I live in a place of understanding. Now keep in mind, this person, whoever it is, has got a pen in his or her hand and is writing an inspired text of the Holy Spirit. God is flowing through the hand that penned this song.

And the writer knows it. And it must bring about somewhat of a dilemma in the heart. If I have the anointing of God, if I have the revelation of God, if I'm living in a place as a sparrow, as he says upon a housetop, where I see more than ordinary men see.

I know who I am. I know where I'm going. I know that my Redeemer lives.

I know that I live because of my Redeemer. I know the purpose of life. I know why I'm left on the earth.

I know that in Christ is my all in all. He's my everything. He's my healer.

He's my deliverer. He's my strength. He's my tower.

I live in a place where I have a higher view, but yet I feel so alone. Have you ever been there? He says in verse four and five, my heart is smitten and withers like grass. I forget to eat my bread.

By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleaved at my skin. The writer says, loneliness has become such a battle that sometimes I forget to eat. Some days I find it hard to get up and go on.

I'm so tired of being alone. I'm so tired of feeling alone. Verse eight, he says, my enemies reproach me all the day and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.

There are voices all around trying to take away my sense of wellbeing, trying to tell me that I have no purpose. Somehow God doesn't see me, doesn't care about me in the way I should be cared for. And perhaps I've failed him in some measure.

Why do I feel so alone? Why can't I connect with people? Why does God sometimes seem so distant from my heart? You know, loneliness does not necessarily stem from the fact that someone is indeed alone.

You don't have to be alone to be lonely. In New York City, the greater New York City area, I don't know, what is it? 17 million people, I think they say, in the greater area of New York City.

And yet it could be one of the loneliest places in the face of the earth. Every day, people go to work packed into subway cars, a hundred strong. And yet in that hundred in the subway, there's probably a substantial number of people that are fighting back the tears.

Every moment, every day, the sense of being alone. Some are thinking about suicide. Some are so despairing.

In our families, we can be alone. Perhaps rejected because you've come to Christ and many others haven't. Maybe you've just lost the ability to relate one to another.

And it can be a lonely place in your own home. And the church can be a lonely place. You're here today in the main sanctuary of the Annex.

You're one of, I don't know, maybe 3,000, 3,500 voices lifted to the Lord today. People before you, behind you, you're all singing together. You've stood on your feet, you've jumped in the air.

But you know that when this is over, you're going to be alone again. You're going to walk out that door. And in your heart, you say, why can't I get rid of this deep sense of loneliness that's in my heart? Now, some of the greatest men and women in scriptural history struggled with this.

So you are not alone. You're not some aberration in the church of Jesus Christ. You're not deficient because you struggle with this.

And you're going to get to see this as we go on with this message. But think about David for a moment. He is anointed to be king of Israel.

He knows he's anointed. The spirit of God has come upon him. He has fought where no one else in the army of Israel could fight.

He's experienced victories that perhaps no one in his generation had seen. He's got talents and abilities given to him of God. But on a point of his journey, he finds himself in a cave.

And in Psalm 142, verse four, he says, I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me. Refuge failed me. No man cared for my soul.

David said, nobody could understand where I was. Nobody could feel what I was feeling. And quite frankly, it's his opinion, at least in the Psalm, that nobody really cared to know.

Nobody was reaching out to me. Nobody was truly asking me how I feel. I couldn't find refuge in any of the humanity around me.

No one cared for my soul. Think of the apostle Paul. Now, David is an anointed warrior, as it is.

He's a king. And Paul arguably has the greatest revelation of any writer in his generation. There's nobody that has more flowing through his pen at that time than the apostle Paul.

Perhaps nobody being used in greater measure, in lasting measure throughout history. But listen to the words he writes to Timothy in the last hours of his life. In 2 Timothy 4, 16, he said, at my first answer, no

man stood with me, but all men forsook me, and I pray God it not be laid to their charge.

How lonely it must have been at that moment in Paul's life. That whole journey and all that he'd done and everything he'd given for all the churches. And finally, he's called into giving an answer before the judicial system of his time.

And nobody stands with him. How tempted he must have been to be overwhelmed at that moment. How tempted we are to throw in the towel when we feel alone, all of us from time to time.

But we need to ask ourselves a question today. And this is where I feel the Holy Spirit would have me go in this message. Is it possible, I just want you to ask the question, just open your heart to this for a moment.

Is it possible that loneliness has deeper roots and a deeper purpose than you and I understand? Is it possible that we live trying to escape something that could truly have a reason for being in our lives? We live in a society in America today that has adopted the theological perspective of all we do and everything we pursue is to escape all hardship. We want no sorrow. Now the Bible promises a day in heaven when there's no sorrow, there's no sighing, there's no loneliness, there's no crying.

But we want it now. As it says in the scripture, I want my prodigal son, I said I want my portion now. We want it all now.

We want every church we go to to make us happier than the last one. Every message to build up our self image and somehow allow us to escape all suffering. And tragically, that pursuit has left much of the church in this country ill prepared for the days that we're about to face.

Now think about this for a moment. There was no loneliness in the human race until sin separated man from God in the Garden of Eden. Adam was not lonely, Eve wasn't lonely.

There was no loneliness. There was fellowship with God. There was fellowship, at least with one other person, of course, it was only the two of them.

But when mankind sinned, loneliness came into the hearts of the human race. Now loneliness is not a sin in itself, but it does lead many people to sin. People abuse substances.

Now we are drawn away, the scripture says, by our own lusts and we are enticed. That's how sin gains a foundation in the human life. But many, many people, it doesn't begin with lust, it begins with loneliness.

Lust eventually takes over. People don't go to the internet and start browsing things that they shouldn't browse because they're initially lust filled in many cases, not all cases, but in many. They're simply lonely.

They don't start to read and do things and get into relationships and start to embrace or take in substances or addictions because they necessarily wanted to do it. It's because there's this aching loneliness in the heart. And something has got to satisfy it.

And yet people come to the church and come to Christ and somehow get the impression that all this stuff is supposed to be gone, I'm never going to be lonely again. We even have the odd song that has those words in it. And so we sit here today saying, well, if I'm never supposed to be lonely again, why am I lonely? What's wrong with me? Why am I as a sparrow upon a housetop? Why do I have this understanding of the kingdom of God, but yet in my heart, it doesn't seem to have found root.

Why do I feel so alone? Now the lonely person that gives in to sin has made a wrong choice. If you find yourself lonely today and sin has snared you or you're moving towards sin, you've made a wrong choice. You're becoming led by the lust of your own fallen nature and you will find yourself in a worse situation than you've ever been in before.

I want to suggest that loneliness is in your heart for a reason. Number one, God put it there. Remember when Cain went into the earth and he was afraid that he was going to be harmed and the scripture says, God put a mark upon him that no man could hurt him.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, it's as if loneliness was put into the human race by God himself as a mark. There's no other way I can explain it. And he put it there because he wants all of you back to himself again.

You will never find anything in this world that satisfies that ache in your heart. You're created by God in the image of God for fellowship with God, for the purposes of God, for a journey with God and then ultimately for eternity with God. And search as you may.

Try, get all the fame you can get, get all the money you can get, get all the popularity, be the life of the party, do anything you want to do, go to any place you want to go. But that ache in your heart will never be satisfied until you and I are back in full relationship with God. It's the mark of God that he put upon all of humanity because he wants you back.

He wants every person born in his image in this world back to him again. But yet mankind incessantly circles this globe looking for some new thing, some new relationship, some new thrill, some new activity to satisfy that ache in the heart that is put there by God himself because there's nobody else that can satisfy it. But not only are you lonely for him, but he is lonely for you.

David the Shaman said, I looked on my right hand and behold there was no man that would know me. Refuge failed me. No man cared for my soul.

But then in verse five he says, I cried unto thee, O Lord, and I said, you are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. David was lonely. But he said, God, I know that you are the only one that can satisfy this ache in my heart.

I know that I'll never be complete until I am back in right relationship with you and in full fellowship with you. We go back to Paul, 2 Timothy 4, 16. At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.

I prayed God that it not be late to their charge. Verse 17, notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me that by me the preaching might be fully known and that all the Gentiles might hear. Paul said there is a message, but until that message brings us to the place of understanding that Jesus Christ is our only lasting strength and comfort in this world, until everything else sometimes is stripped away and all that remains is a friend that stays closer than a brother, as Proverbs says, until we stop looking on the left and on the right, until we come to church and it's no longer about who's on my left hand, who's on my right hand, who's before me and who's behind me.

Thank God for people, but it's not about that. That will not satisfy the ache in my heart at any time. It is only a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

That's the only full message. And Paul said, I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. Remember the psalmist said, my enemies reproach me all day and they that are met against me are sworn against me.

I was delivered. I'm not deficient. I haven't missed the gate on this journey, hallelujah.

I am fully embraced by God, fully endorsed by God, fully walking and moving with God. And there's something that God is doing in and through my life that is going to bring glory to his name. Now we come to Christ, we come to God through Christ, and we are given the Holy Spirit of God, who comes and makes his dwelling within us.

It's God, the third person of God living in us. And we're told that we're given a new heart, a new mind and a new spirit. Now that newness comes from God within us.

God says, I'm going to share my heart. I'm going to, it's my mind I'm going to give to you. It's my heart, it's my spirit.

That's the newness. It's not you and I willing ourselves to do better. No, it's God coming.

And he says, now let me, the two of us are going to now become one. And let me share who I am with you. Now, is it possible that loneliness in the human heart is in part at least God sharing with us the longing in his heart to have all people come back to him? The loneliness that you and I sometimes feel when we walk down the streets of New York City.

Now, you can waste your time in a self-focus trying to somehow get rid of that feeling. But is it possible that is the heart of God? Is it possible it's the manifestation of the heart of Christ in you? Saying, look, just look away from yourself for a moment. It's, I love you.

I have embraced you. You are mine. I've called you by my name.

It's not all about you anymore, but look out and look at all the men and women in the streets. Look at the teenagers on the street corner. Look at that senior across the hall.

I am lonely for them. It's in measure a part of the sharing of the suffering of Christ. Second Timothy 2.12, Paul said, if we suffer, we shall reign with him.

And as I said earlier, we live in a generation that just lives to escape anything that has the word suffer attached to it. But yet in the scriptures, it's very clear that if we become partakers of the suffering of Christ, we will share in the victory of Christ. The cross was about other people.

Jesus often felt alone. The scripture tells us he prayed alone. He dwelt alone.

In John 11 verses 33 and 35, coming to the tomb of Lazarus, the scripture says he groaned and was troubled and he wept. He must have felt so alone. When he was in the room with his own disciples and they're trying to convince him not to go to the cross.

So other, the scripture says he could not commit himself to man for he knew what was in man. When they came to make him a king, he walked away. It must have been lonely.

You see, the only real lasting fellowship he had was with his father and with the Holy Spirit. And that's why when you and I read those words, Father, if it'd be possible, if it'd be possible, take this cup from me.

There's nothing of this world that can satisfy me.

Father, it's the fellowship I've had with you that's been forever. And even the thought of losing that for a season. I believe that Christ was almost unbearable.

Hebrews 4.15 says he was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. He was tested in this. If he wasn't lonely, then the scripture isn't true.

He had to be tested in all points like as we are yet without sin. He didn't try to escape the loneliness. But in spite of it, he allowed the hand of God to reach out through him to others, in spite of his own pain, to other people whose pain would be eternal if he drew back his hand and failed to act.

And if we as God's people spend our day drawing back from humanity, spend our day trying to escape hardship, spend our day not really wanting to be partakers of what it really means to be the church of Jesus Christ in this world, if we draw back our hand, how many people are going to suffer for eternity? Well, I thank God he didn't draw back. I thank God he didn't say, Father, my only happiness I have is with you and I'm not willing to forsake it for anything. If that were the case, then you and I would be here today without hope.

We'd be here without help. We'd be here without strength. All of this would just be words in a page.

There'd be no power in it whatsoever. But Hebrews 12, two says, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. The joy, the joy of you, the joy of me being reconciled to God again.

The joy of the Father's heart, the longing, the loneliness in the heart of God being satisfied. Did you know that God has a need that only you can meet? You ever considered that? You ever thought that God might be lonely? If that weren't the case, couldn't he just have written off all of humanity? Couldn't he have said, well, I tried, it didn't work. Let me create another world, some other place, some other people.

Oh no, when he came down into the garden of Eden and he yelled out, Adam. Oh no, he was like a father who had lost his child. He was like a husband who'd lost his wife.

Oh no, oh no, oh no. There was a loneliness in the heart of God, a loneliness for every person throughout all of time and eternity who would miss out on the great love of God, the great provision of God, the great salvation of God. It caused him to come to the earth as a man.

It caused him to go to the cross. It caused him to cry out, it is finished. And now he sends us as his church.

He says, as the Father has sent me, now I send you into the world. So my question is, are we to live to escape all hardship? Are we to live just to be happy? Now, happiness is wonderful. And Christ, there were times of great joy in his own life, but are we not still on a redemptive mission as the church of Jesus Christ? No, we can't personally redeem anybody, but we bring people to the Redeemer.

And ought I not to share something of the heart of God? How can I represent somebody that I would be aloof from? If I didn't feel anything that's in the heart of God, if I could walk by all of humanity and feel nothing, if I could see a person crying on a bench in Central Park and not be moved to speak to them, do I really share the heart of God? I would say, for the joy set before us, we should be willing to endure the cross and despise its shame. The joy of men, women, and children reconciled to God, the joy of knowing our Father's heart being satisfied. For the joy, for the joy.

It would be so foolish of me to throw away something out of my life that God is using to give me compassion. Lonely people are aware of lonely people. Did you know that? And if you suffered yourself and had to be comforted by God alone, then it becomes only a natural extension that you start reaching out and you become compassionate to the needs of others around you.

If you and I lived on a mountaintop, we'd be obnoxious to this world. We'd just come down with our million-dollar smiles and our list of things that people have to do to get right with God. There'd be absolutely nothing in us that really represented a Christ that went to a cross.

Oh, that passionate love of Jesus, that loneliness in the heart of God for his own creation caused prostitutes to fall at his feet and wash them with their tears, caused lepers to crawl through a crowd, caused blind men to crowd on the side of the road, could it be, could it be, could it be? Could it be that we've not understood the deeper workings of God in our hearts? Could it be that as an American church age, the life and liberty and pursuit of happiness has become the theology of our churches? Could it be that the society has so infiltrated the church that we don't look like Christ anymore and we reject everything or most things that could produce his character within us? The only way to deal with loneliness is put it to work. That magical person is not gonna come into your life and take that out of your heart. Oh, it may dull it for a season, but it'll come back again.

If you truly share the heart of Christ, if you have the heart of Christ in you, there's a loneliness for people who are lost. It's God's heart being given to you. Does it answer the question now, why am I so lonely? When we don't understand things is when we are focused on ourselves all the time.

I shouldn't feel this way. Put your loneliness to work. Reach out from yourself.

When you go out into the streets of the city this day or go to the fellowship after this service that's going to be happening, put it to practice. Reach out to somebody that's standing there alone. Ask God for the compassion to be able to move towards people that he sees and knows.

Have that same cry that you have in their heart, but they don't have the answer to it. You have the answer. Proverbs 18, 24 says, a man that has friends must show himself friendly.

And there is a friend, Jesus, that sticks closer than a brother. A man that has friends must show himself friendly. New York City, we get so used to our little bubble around us, don't we? Our apartment is our space.

Don't knock on my door, don't come around. Everybody gets tall and thin. I'm tall and thin on an elevator.

You ever notice that? Everybody stares at the numbers, 38, 39, 40. You know, there's 13 lost souls in the elevator with you, but it's just like I want out of here. These people are in my space.

I think if you left here today with the understanding that God is lonely for his creation and that God's heart is in you, and if you are dealing with an un, you can't put your finger on the reason for the loneliness in your life, it is possible that God in his mercy is sharing his heart with you, sharing how he feels. We have to trust him for the power to break out of that space. When you have 17 million people crammed into a specific area, geographical area, it's human behavior to want to push everybody out, to have a three-foot space around you that nobody can get into, but that's not the way the kingdom of God works.

People have to be able to break through and touch you. God, give us the grace to live this. Put it to work.

That's the only way I know to begin to understand why you and I deal with these things. Put the loneliness to work. Put it to work in the kingdom of God.

Reach out to other people. Breaking through that three-foot bubble for many people in New York City is as much a step of faith as David running into the valley to face Goliath, but God gives the power to do it. And over my holidays, I had a chance to share Christ.

One particular occasion, it was a couple that you wouldn't think had any interest in the things of God, but I felt something in my heart along the lines of what I'm talking about right now. I felt the loneliness of God for these people. I can't explain it any other way.

And I said to them, I'd like to tell you a story of my life. It'll take me about four to five minutes. They said, but I won't tell you if you don't want to hear it.

And they said, yes, we'd like to hear it. And the exterior of this people you'd never think, in the exterior, they're interested in God. An hour later, the most marvelous hour we had together, and then I found out that this man who's got quite a lengthy past and a lot in it, said, I've been talking to God and I'm so tired of hurting people.

I'm so tired of living the way I'm living. If I hadn't felt how God feels, I would never have spoken. But I felt something in my heart.

I felt God wants you. And I was able to tell them, listen, I preach in New York City. It's nothing on Sunday night to see 30, 40, 50 people come to Christ at an altar.

I said, but it isn't about that. It's about you. And the moment I said that and said it in sincerity, that's when the tears came.

It's about you. I said, God wants you. He's lonely for you.

He wants you home. Wants you back to himself. And people get overwhelmed.

Father, would you help us to, would you help us, Lord, to represent you in New York City? Would you help us, Lord, not to just go about our day unaware, unmoved, focused on ourselves? Would you deliver us, God, from this and deliver your church, Lord, and this country, God, from all of these things? Would you bring us into the work of Jesus Christ? Would you help us? I pray, God, for the lonely people that are here today. I pray that you give us all the grace. Give us all the power.

Give us the ability, God, to understand these things and help us to move forward out of our own pain, out of our own struggle, and into what really is dear to your heart. Thank you, Lord, for not letting us become so aloof, so happy, so self-focused, that we're just completely unmindful of the work of the cross. Thank you, Lord, for not letting us go.

Thank you for sharing your heart with us. Thank you, God, that you've not let us find satisfaction in anything in this world. No relationship, no position, no power, nothing has ever been able to satisfy that need.

Only you, Lord. Would you give us the power, Lord Jesus, as a church, to reach this city? Would you take us deeper, farther? Would you do something more profound than we've ever known? Would you guide us? Would you lead us, Lord? Would you give us hearts of compassion? Would you do it supernaturally?

We can't program this. We can't even reason it.

It's deeper than that. It's something that you have to do in the heart. Would you help us to care more about people than how we look before people? Would you give us the grace, Lord, to represent the Christ of Calvary? Oh, my God.

I'm asking, Lord, for you to do something deeper and more profound in this church than we've ever known. I'm asking you to take us farther than we've ever been. I'm asking you, Lord, to give us an understanding which you promised your people would be the stability of their times.

Understanding. God, help us to care. Help us not to draw back.

You said, if any man draw back, my soul will have no pleasure in him. Help us not to draw back. Help us to move forward, Lord.

Deliver us from all the snares and the traps that are just waiting for the lonely soul. Help us to understand. We ask it in Jesus' name.

I'm going to give an altar call today for people who would just like to put their loneliness to work in the kingdom of God, to realize, as David did and Paul did, that Christ will stand with you, He'll walk with you. And Paul said, by this, the preaching will be fully known among the Gentiles. People will fully understand that God is willing to walk with men.

Let's stand, and I'm going to ask you just to move out of your seat in the annex between the screens in the main sanctuary. Just come to the altar, please, if you will, to the front of the sanctuary, and we'll pray. Lord says, I will never fail you, I'll never forsake you.

I've come to you when you reached out to me, and I've made my dwelling with you. And there is a day coming when there's no more sorrow, there's no more tears. You can't even sigh in that place.

Not a memory in your heart that would cause you to take a breath and exhale in a manner of exasperation. All of that is gone. But till then, you and I are given to share the heart of Christ in this world.

And I'm very thankful that He doesn't let us just become aloof. That means distanced from the pain of humanity around us. Distanced from the heart of God.

Ending up singing songs, but looking nothing like the Savior. I'm thankful, are you thankful? Yes. I'm thankful.

Now, if you can take, now, if you can take that loneliness that's in your heart today, and you channel it in the right direction, and you say, Lord, that's how you feel about other people. That's how much I long for something to come into my life. You long more than I do.

For fallen men, women, and children to come back to you again. So God, please help me to get the focus off of myself and to let this be channeled for good. Let me go to the wounded and let me take that heart you've given me and tell them that there is a Savior who loves them.

And it's not a program. It's not a tract anymore. It's not four laws.

It's Christ we're presenting to people. It's the true Savior. It's the heart of God where we can weep with those that weep, and we can feel the struggle and the pain of people who have known life without love and without God.

This is a blessing. Lord, I thank you. I thank you, Lord, that you're giving understanding to us.

You're helping us, Lord, to know what it is to be partakers of your life. You're helping us to care. You're helping us, God, through the indifference of our own human hearts to have the heart of God beating within us.

Now, you don't leave us, Lord, in sorrow. You don't leave us empty. You come to us like you did to David and you did to Paul.

You come to us. But, God, don't ever let us lose your heart. I thank you, Lord, for what good is going to come from these things that you've spoken to us today.

I thank you with all my heart. In Jesus' mighty name, hallelujah. Hallelujah.

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