

### 31.3 Good Mourning

Greetings, Patriots, this is Perry Greene with GNA. I have a little bit of a new approach to today's podcast. It is entitled, "Good Mourning." M-O-U-R-N-I-N-G.

A few weeks ago I was talking with a Funeral Director in preparation for a funeral service we would be doing. The Director knew of my history and my podcasts and suggested that I do some podcasts on "Grief." I thought about it a long time because I had trouble connecting the mission of GNA to podcasts on Grief. Then I thought about how grief is a connecting or reconnecting point for God in our lives. In fact, grief actually can lead us to a closer relationship with Him.

I plan on presenting a weekly podcast on the subject of grief, at least for the foreseeable future. I am going to aim for Wednesdays but the actual "Grief Day" may vary, depending on what topics I need to cover. Please have your friends listen in if they are dealing with grief.

I have dealt with grief professionally as a Minister. I have conducted many funeral services over the forty-five years I spent in Church Ministry. I thought I understood grief until it touched me personally. Over the last eighteen years I have lost my dad, my wife, and most recently my mom. While we can understand much about grief intellectually, emotionally it takes its toll on us in different ways.

Grief is a hard experience and can cause a lot of personal damage in the physical; social; spiritual; and emotional arenas.

Researchers from the Medical College of Virginia, in a study reported in Psychology Today, concluded that the death of a close relative is the single biggest contributor to depression. A serious illness would increase a person's risk of depression by 330%; divorce/breakup raises it to an unhealthy 1,130%; serious marital problem and assault pushes risk to an alarming 1,400%; but the risk of depression in the death of a close relative soars to a dangerous 1,500%. (Psychology Today 11-12/95).

First, I want us to realize that grief is normal, even for Christians. There are many misconceptions about Christians and grief. Some think that Christians don't grieve. Some think Christians SHOULD'N'T grieve. Some think that Christians get over grief quickly. Listen to Paul's words in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14** (NKJV):

**<sup>13</sup> But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.**

Did you notice that Christians grieve? That grief is somewhat different than others' grief in that Christians grieve with hope. "Hope" in the Bible is usually an eager anticipation of something good. It is an assurance, not a wish.

This passage tells us that we can hope for the reunion with our loved ones who have died in Christ. It also tells us that we can hope for the return of Jesus. In other words, we will get to see and meet the Jesus we have lived for in person!

Second, we grieve because we love

**CS Lewis** once said:

**To love at all is vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it careful round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket - safe, dark, motionless, airless - it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable,**

**impenetrable, irredeemable...The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers...of love is Hell.**

When Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus to resurrect him, both Mary and Martha said to Jesus that if He had been there, Lazarus would not have died (**John 11:21, 33**). They knew His power over disease and that is why they had sent for Him days before Lazarus died. Jesus saw their love for their brother. When Jesus got to the tomb we read in **John 11:35-36** (NKJV):

**<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"**

No doubt Jesus loved Lazarus, but He also loved Lazarus' sisters. I believe He was moved by their love and grief for their brother. I also believe that when we stand by the grave of our loved ones and weep, Jesus weeps with us.

Third, we know that emotions are real and powerful. Sometimes it is difficult for us to control our emotions. I think that is why Martha and Mary both confronted Jesus about His absence. Truly, Jesus could have saved Lazarus from his illness but He had a bigger intention. He would bring glory to God by raising Lazarus from the dead!

Our emotions can range from sorrow and lament to regret, to anger and many others. Many of the Psalms express lament over some emotional issue. You will remember that Job expressed anger in the frustration of his suffering and loss as he lashed out at God. Of course, God reminded Job of his place before Him.

No matter what the emotion, we need to express it in a safe and respectful way. Once again, look at Martha and Mary. They expressed their sorrow and frustration to Jesus. They spoke their feelings.

I have taken GriefShare as a participant and as a leader. If you are grieving today, I would encourage you, when you are ready, to find a GriefShare meeting or something similar and attend. There are like-minded people there who want to support and encourage you. You have a safe place to express your grief, your anger and your frustrations.

Fourth, and last for today, we know that adjustments can be hard. Regardless of your loss, you have to make changes. It may be that you will have to deal with being alone and lonely. You may be doing the work of two by yourself.

My friend, Patty lost her husband several years ago. A few weeks after his funeral she and I talked and she made a profound statement. She said, "It's a couples' world." She found that she had to make adjustments in her aloneness. While friends that she had with her husband were kind to her, she no longer fully fit with them because she was now a single widow instead of part of a couple. It was and is an adjustment.

Keep listening. We will deal with more grief topics in the weeks ahead. Until next time . . .

Keep The Light of Good Mourning Burning!