

Jesus Understands Your Loneliness

by Jon Bloom

Do you ever think of Jesus as lonely? Certainly his moments in Gethsemane and on Calvary were uniquely and terribly lonely, but what about the rest of his life? In some sense, he may have been the loneliest human in history.

Loneliness is what we feel when we're isolated from others. Loneliness often has less to do with others' physical absence and more to do with feeling disconnected or alienated from them. Or misunderstood by them. In fact, these are far more painful species than mere absence, because we feel the isolation of being despised and rejected.

Which is precisely how Isaiah prophetically described Jesus: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). Given who Jesus was, this experience would have begun decades before his public ministry even began. Which means Jesus is able to sympathize with your loneliness far more than you might have previously thought (Hebrews 4:15).

Unsurpassed Homesickness

Jesus humbled himself to be “born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7).

We have little ability to comprehend just how much this cost him. He experienced both the absence of his Father and human rejection at levels we can scarcely begin to imagine.

When I say that Jesus experienced the absence of his Father, I don't mean that he didn't enjoy spiritual communion with the Father through the Spirit on earth. He did, and it was sweeter than anything you or I have yet experienced (Matthew 3:17; John 1:32; 5:20)

Yet in order to be incarnated, he left, in some sense, the manifest and holy presence of his Father and the glory he enjoyed there from an eternity before the world existed (John 17:5). He had to endure living in a world under the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). Think of when you've been far away from your dearest ones in a lonely, perhaps even desolate, place. Speaking to them by phone may have been sweet, but it was not the same as being with them.

This is a poor analogy, but it makes the point. As the apostle Paul said, there is nothing like being face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). Jesus would have

experienced a “homesickness” for the presence of his Father far more profound and painful than anything we’ve experienced.

Alone in the World

Now, imagine what living in this world was like for him. Jesus was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). We might think this sounds like a pleasant problem to have. I doubt it was only pleasant. I suspect it tormented him. If Lot experienced daily torment while living in Sodom because of the “lawless deeds that he saw and heard” (2 Peter 2:8), how much worse was it for sinless Jesus constantly surrounded by sinners and demonic powers, rarely if ever able to fully escape their defiling presence?

And imagine what Jesus’s childhood must have been like. Do you remember what it felt like to want friends? Jesus was truly human and would have longed for human friendship too. But lacking the sin nature everyone else had, and having a divine nature no one else had, he would have been a very odd person. Holiness makes sinners want to flee. Jesus would have stuck out morally like a sore thumb, never quite being understood, frequently despised and rejected, even within his own family.

White Sheep of the Family

His parents knew who he was and loved him deeply. But they wouldn't have fully understood him. How could they? Nor would they have been able to protect him from others' stinging remarks or cruel mocking over his strangeness.

I wonder how much of that came from his siblings. His brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:55–56) would have grown increasingly self-conscious around him as they aged, aware of their own sinful, self-obsessed motives and behavior, while noting that Jesus didn't seem to exhibit any himself. And they couldn't have helped notice the unique way their parents deferred to him.

What kind of sibling resentments grew? We know that all was not harmonious because Jesus's own brothers didn't believe in him (John 7:5), possibly not until after his resurrection (Acts 1:14). Jesus was a sinless person living with sinful parents, sinful siblings, sinful extended relatives, sinful neighbors, sinful countrymen, sinful foreigners, and sinful disciples, not to mention the sinful spiritual entities he would have had an unprecedented awareness of and sensitivity to. No one on earth could identify totally with him. No human being could put an arm around him as he sat in tears and say, "I know exactly what

you're going through." Jesus's experience of rejection, sorrow, and grief would have begun as soon as he was old enough to comprehend and communicate.

And we think we feel weary. How did he bear it? What did it mean for him to sing psalms like, "My soul is greatly troubled. But you, O Lord — how long?"

(Psalm 6:3)?

Most Lonely Moment in History

But that was all a precursor. There was a supreme moment of loneliness, so dark and deep that only Jesus has ever experienced. It was on the cross the moment he became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). In that unfathomably horrible, incomprehensibly lonely moment, he felt forsaken by his Father (Matthew 27:46) and all those he loved. He was ravaged physically and spiritually "beyond human semblance" (Isaiah 52:14). Having spent his earthly life estranged by his sinlessness, now Jesus was estranged by the sin he willingly bore — *our* sin.

No one has experienced or understands the depths of loneliness like Jesus.

End of All Loneliness

But he can and does understand your loneliness. He can sympathize with this weakness more than you know (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus doesn't merely understand your loneliness; he's destroying it. Because he bore the sin that estranged and alienated you from God and died on your behalf, you are no longer truly a stranger or alien, but you are a fellow citizen with all the saints and a member of God's family (Ephesians 2:19).

Loneliness, like every form of suffering, is passing away for those who love him. Ahead of you is the full family fellowship of God and all of his redeemed saints forever. The day is nearing when you will know him as you have been fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

So "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that [you] may receive mercy and find grace to help" with every lonely need (Hebrews 4:16). And be a saint who helps others experience a foretaste of heaven by extending to them the loneliness-destroying love of Jesus.

Stephen Ministers are especially trained to come alongside you to listen, care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support during a time of loneliness. There are several ways to make arrangements to talk to a Stephen Minister.

(1) One way is to complete this confidential Stephen Ministry form. Bob Bohler or Deb Williams will then contact you.

OR

(2) Call directly: Pastor Bob Bohler (706-549-9284) or Stephen Ministry Referrals Coordinator Deb Williams (706-247-9000).