



Good Grief

Pastor Jerry Gillis – June 12, 2016

So you guys have probably figured out by this point that I'm not, I've chosen to do something that I think that was the leadership of the Spirit to do, and that was to push 'pause' in our series called World View that we'll pick back up next week. But I wanted to push pause so I could just share with you something that's going on in my own heart, and I think will be good for us as a church this morning.

As a pastor, I am, I'm not new to grief. It's part of the job, it's part of what you do. If you don't deal with grief very well, this is probably not the vocation that you want to have. So this is not new to me. I have been doing full-time vocational pastoral ministry for the better part of a quarter century at this point, and grief is not new to me. But pastoring is what I do, it's not who I am. And so, I often have a job to do in the midst of grief, that's just part of what I do. So we have grieving families or friends or whatever in our church and whether it's me or it's one of our other pastors, right, we have a job to do in the midst of grief. But I grieve too. I'm a human being. Pastoring is what I do, it's not who I am. And so I will also grieve from time to time as well.

And through the course of my life and walk with Jesus and particularly through the course of ministry, I've learned that there are some ways to grieve good, good grief we could call it, and there are poor ways to grieve. And so what I want to do today is maybe share with you some of the better ways that we can think about how we grieve.

Now let me start by saying that grief doesn't play by the rules, so sometimes it's very difficult to deal with. It just doesn't play by any rules. It is unwelcome, it's inhospitable, it's rude, it shows up whenever it wants, we sometimes try and keep grief, you know, in a closet somewhere in our house but then it follows us out in public, and we just don't like it. It's always and forever inconvenient. You never draw up a good time where you just go "yeah grief, come on in". You just don't do that, right? So understanding that, you have to understand how grief works and how rude grief is sometimes because sometimes it will just come on you uninvited, unsolicited, and that's just what happens.

You know, it was a year ago March that my grandmother passed away. Great lady. Every memory I have of that woman is great. I'm grateful that I've got that. Every memory that I have of that woman is fantastic. She was a treasure, loved Jesus, was a church secretary for a while. Just loved the Lord, great woman, can't say enough about her. And then she died. She was over ninety years old, she had Alzheimer's disease and it was a very long goodbye, right. I mean it was difficult.

But she passed away and so my father said would you, do you feel like you'd be okay to do the funeral. Well, of course, I mean that would be like

an incredible honor to do the funeral of the woman I loved so much and who was an incredible Godly lady and like it wouldn't be a tough funeral from a content standpoint at all, so I put together a funeral and of course, you know, consulted with my Dad on all of that. He, as the oldest son, and so we did that and we did a funeral and you know, I had a job to do and it was, I feel like the funeral really honored her life and really made much of Jesus, which she would have wanted me to do and in fact, told me to do on more than one occasion in my life. And so afterwards, you know you're surrounded by family you have a lot of fun, you know, you're talking, you're eating, you're sharing stories, you're doing all that and but again, you're a grandson, the oldest grandson, but you're also Pastor Jerry who's got a job to do.

Well, fast-forward about nine or ten months after that in December. In December, we're getting ready in our house here in Buffalo to you know, decorate. We're taking all the regular stuff down and putting all the Christmas stuff up, right? All the little naked baby angels and all the stuff you put in your house, right? And my grandmother, I can't think of Christmas without thinking of her, because she was like a child's first visit to Disney World was every Christmas for her. She just lit up like a Christmas tree every time Christmas came around and family was around and all of that. I just can't think of Christmas without thinking of her. And so we're decorating and doing all that we do in our house and Trace isn't home because he's still doing school, college and it's me and my wife and my younger son Tanner.

We're trimming the tree and we're putting stuff out and I don't know about you, but when I'm decorating the house I've got to have Christmas music on, right? It just doesn't work with ZZ Top. You've got to actually have Christmas music that's playing in the house while you're doing this. And so we're playing Christmas music and we're decorating the house and everything's going great, right? I'm singing goofily and we're you know, doing all we do, and then "White Christmas" comes on. It's my grandmother's favorite song and I lose it. I'm done. I melt down into a pool. It's like grief showed up and took me by the throat and gave me a choke hold. And I didn't know what to do. I had to excuse myself and went into another room because you know, now I'm just like I'm a mess and I'm thinking to myself you know what? Maybe I can tell myself some things, but here's the thing. When grief grabs you in a choke hold you can't rationalize with grief. It just doesn't work. Oh, you know, "she lived a long life, she was over ninety". So? "Well, you know, it was expected." So? "Well, you know, she's in a better place". I understand. But I want her in this place. That's what happens, you see when grief takes hold of you and starts choking you. You understand, you begin to understand what it feels like.

See, I want us to be able to understand a little bit about this because what I did in those moments I realized is that I had not fully grieved for the loss of relationship with my grandmother. Because I loved this lady. Every memory I have is incredible and I had not really grieved it, and so I had kind of stuffed it a little bit and it showed back up. So what I want to do is I want to take just a few minutes for us to talk about some better ways to be able to grieve.

Why do I want to do that? Well, because our church has suffered a big loss. Pastor Daryl departing us and being with Jesus is a tremendous heartbreak for his family, it's a tremendous heartbreak for our staff team, for our board, for all of his close friends, which there are many and for our church as a whole. Now I realize that not everybody here had a close relationship with Daryl, it's impossible when you've got thousands of people on multiple campuses, right, I get that. Just like not everybody has a close relationship with me, right? You know me better than I know you in a lot of ways. And that's just part of it, right. You heard Pastor Daryl speak and you've seen some of his leadership initiatives and you understand the testimony of his Godliness and all of that, but maybe you weren't super close to him so you're not quite feeling that emotion, but his family is and the staff team is and many in our church are.

But you know what grief looks like in your life. You've experienced it. Maybe in the loss of a spouse or a child, or a parent. Or maybe you've felt it in the loss of a relationship. Or maybe you've felt it in abuse that you've never dealt with. Or abandonment that you've experienced in your heart and in your life. We've all experienced what it feels like for that dark cloud to envelope us and to feel like it's suffocating us. And if you haven't, you will. I hate to be the bearer of bad news today, because that's not what I do, but you will. This is life and as long as you live it this is going to be something that you've got to understand. That's why while today it may not be the bulls eye for you, you'd better file this message away. Because you're going to want to come back to it and you're going to want to listen and learn from it.

So what I want to do is I want to take us to some of Paul's words to the church at Thessalonica because I want us to be able to understand maybe some counsel that we can get from the Scripture in times where we are grieving. Because here's the bottom line. These are things that I'm working through right now as we speak. I am grieving because Daryl was one of my closest friends. His family is grieving, many of his other very close friends are grieving. And this is what I'm learning in the process, and what I want us as a church to understand in the process, because we need God to help us. Whatever grief you have to deal with or that you will deal with. I want to be able to have something available to you that's going to help you.

So to understand what Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica in the first letter that he wrote, we have to understand what their mindset was. They came from a pagan background, right, so they didn't really know anything too much about the God of Israel, and so they were learning all of these things. But when they came to know what God had done for the world in Jesus, and that their sins could be forgiven and their life could be transformed, and they could have new hope and new life and become new creatures. Many of them embraced the message that Paul was preaching to them the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ and as a result of that now they're following hard after, and they also heard Paul when he was with them talk about the fact that Jesus who died for our sins, who was buried and who resurrected from the dead, who appeared over a forty-day period to lots and lots of people, and then who ascended to the Father, he's actually not going to stay there, he's going to come back. And they were thrilled by that.

In fact, this group of people in Thessalonica were so fired up that many of them started like quitting their jobs because they're like he's coming back, maybe tomorrow. Maybe next month, whatever. They started quitting their jobs and Paul had to kind of say hey, look man, if you don't work, you don't eat. You've got to actually work until Jesus comes, you need to do what you've got to do until he comes back. I don't know when he's coming but he is coming, and they got really fired up about this, so much so that some of them ran into a little crisis of understanding because they were looking forward to the great appearing of Jesus' coming but when he had not come some of them that were followers of Jesus started to die. And now their friends and family who are also followers of Jesus were going wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. He's supposed to come back but they have, they've died. Are they going to miss it, are they going to be forgotten?

Paul has to write to them, in particularly in chapter four and what he says to them is no way they're forgotten. In fact, I need you to understand something. That those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, when he returns he's bringing them with him and they're going to come back, so don't worry. They're good. Everything's okay. So he tells them this to make sure they understand where he's coming from. But in giving them this instruction, Paul says something by the inspiration of the Spirit of God in one verse that gives us a lot when we deal with this thing called grief.

Listen to chapter four, 1 Thessalonians chapter four verse thirteen.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. Now I want us to pause here for just a minute because what

I'm asking the question of in this verse is what counsel can we take by, from Paul through the Holy Spirit, what counsel can we take to learn how we can grieve well or to have good grief instead of bad grief?

Here's the first thing. We learn here that we need to grieve long enough and real enough. Let me explain what I mean. Look again at the verse.

Verse thirteen: Brothers and sisters, we do not you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not, listen here it is, grieve like, and then he makes a comparison that I'll get to in just a minute. You see, what Paul is doing in this verse, ladies and gentlemen, is he's not suggesting that Christians, those who follow after Jesus won't grieve. He's actually assuming that we will. But he's saying that our grief is going to be different than grief of others who don't follow after Jesus. So he's actually making this assumption.

Where did we get the idea in modern-day Christianity, that to grieve means that we don't have faith? That to grieve means that we don't trust God? Where did we get that idea? For some reason in modern-day Christian thinking, we all think that we have to demonstrate ourselves as like these superstar spiritual human beings that nothing affects. But that's not real living. That's not the real human experience. Jesus taught us what it meant to be actually fully human and he was fully God at the same time.

You see, what grieving, ladies and gentlemen is a part of loving. It comes with the territory. I've told my wife a lot of times, if you don't cry at my funeral I'm going to be really mad! Like seriously mad! And she's all like, no you won't, you'll be with Jesus, you're not even thinking about it at that

point, and I'm like no, I'm going to ask him if I can have a few minutes and I want to meet you when you show up and I'm going to give you the business for not crying at my funeral. Hey man, if people don't cry at your funeral, that's not actually a good sign. Grieving is a part of loving.

And so when we grieve, we actually have to grieve long enough and deep enough so that we don't try and segment this out or sweep it away like it didn't happen because either a) we just don't want to deal with it or b) we want to give people the impression that we're some super-star spiritual Christian person, and nothing affects me and I'm Teflon and I can...that's going to come back to get you. You need to grieve long enough and deep enough and real enough because ultimately when you try and cut grief off too soon it's not good for you.

In fact, when you look at the Scriptures and you start to see them unfold in the Old Testament and even in the New, what you see is you see teaching that gives us an invitation to tell God what's going on in our heart. Now listen, it's not as if God, I'm going to let you in on a little secret. It's not as if He doesn't already know, so why play games? When you're grieving something, God invites you, he does it all through. In fact, if you read the Psalms, you start seeing this over and over and over again because the Psalms basically explain the whole kind of spectrum of human emotion in dealing with things that happen in life. From joy and exuberance to sadness and grief and abandonment and despair it's all in there. And so you could read like Psalm 102 if you wanted to, and you would see in the beginning of that these kinds of ideas.

Or, I could show you Psalm sixty-two where in verse eight it says these words: Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. You see the invitation there? The invitation first is: trust him in all times. So in your good seasons, trust God. Don't forget about him when everything's good and you feel like you don't need him. Trust him in your good seasons, and trust him in your bad seasons. And when you are in those seasons, here's the invitation: pour out your heart to me. I already know what's going on in there and by the way, I'm big enough to handle it. If you're upset that somebody's gone too soon, I'm big enough to handle that. If you think this is a crock, this shouldn't be, it doesn't feel fair, well it's already going on in here and he already knows, just pour it out, but do it trusting him. Do it trusting him at all times, because he gives us that invitation.

In fact, there are entire books in the Bible, ladies and gentlemen that are written on grief. The whole book. There's a book in the Bible in case you didn't know this called Lamentations. Do you know what it means to lament? It means to grieve. They were grieving over the destruction of Jerusalem, they were grieving over what was happening to their children and listen, listen to the instruction in Lamentations chapter two verse nineteen. It says: Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at every street corner. God invites, in the midst of grief and sorrow for us to pour our hearts out to him. Why? Because we need to grieve. We need to grieve long enough and real enough and deep enough. We need to feel that.

But do you know even if you fast forward into the New Testament, when you see the life of Stephen in the early church, after there were these new followers of Jesus, Stephen ends up getting killed for his faith in Jesus. He's the first martyr of the church. And there's a little verse tucked away in chapter eight that I don't want you to miss. Listen to what it says: Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. They mourned deeply for him. Why? Because you have to grieve long enough and real enough and deep enough. It is a part of the experience of living.

Now, that said, I need to tell you a second thing. So just as much as we need to grieve real enough and deep enough and long enough, we also need to make sure that we don't grieve too long. I want to take you back into our passage here in verse thirteen, and it says this: Brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not - listen to it - grieve like the rest of mankind.

Now what Paul is doing here is he's saying something about grief and he's also saying something about the people who grieve apart from Jesus. That word grief, I'm going to tell you something not for any type of, because you care or it's impressive, but for only one reason. In the Greek language when Paul uses this term grieve, he uses the present subjunctive tense. Now that doesn't matter to you except for what it says about the word. When Paul uses the present subjunctive tense, he's actually talking about the type of grief that people who don't know Jesus have. And that tense suggests that it is on-going, that it's pervasive, that it is internal. That it just keeps on. But he is contrasting that with the quality of grief that those who are in Jesus actually experience. We have a different quality to our grief,

because our grief doesn't last forever like those who have no hope, like those who don't know Jesus. That is a different thing altogether. And the reason this is important for us is because that means that we should not grieve too long, because we do not have an unending grief. We experience grief, but we shouldn't experience grief for too long. We have to experience it fully and deeply and real. But we can't experience it for too long.

There's something to learn from the Jewish people in this. Even to this day. But back in the ancient world, the Jewish people, when somebody would die in the family, they would do what is called sitting Shiva. And to sit Shiva means that you come and you sit with the family that is grieving for seven days. The word Shiva means seven. So for seven days the family that's grieving stays in the house, and the close friends and relatives come over and they sit, typically in the Jewish tradition, they sit on the floor and they don't talk, they're not, you know, everything's okay, everything's blah, blah, blah. They're not doing that, they're just sitting, keeping their mouths shut and grieving. That's what they're doing. For seven days. Isn't it interesting that the Jews put a time table on grief? Why do they do that? Because they understood that grief doesn't last forever.

When you come out of the time of Shiva in the Jewish, ancient Jewish world, you enter into the time of Sheloshim. Sheloshim means thirty, so the seven is a part of the thirty, so another, you know, twenty-three days after this, you are now free to start going back into life. You can leave your house, you can go back into life, you can start back into work. But the men don't shave, because they want to be reminded every day that they are still in a position of grief so as they don't shove it aside.

And do you know where they base that thirty days from in the Jewish culture, that time frame? From the lunar cycle. Why do they do that? Because on day one, you see no part of the brightness of the moon, you just see dark. But by day thirty you see the fullness of the moon radiating the beauty of the sun.

They're on to something. They understand that you have to grieve and that you have to grieve deeply and you have to grieve authentically. But they also understand that you don't grieve for too long. Why? Because that communicates that we don't have hope.

And the truth is that this grief that we're talking about as believers is different than the grief that people who are not believers experience. So if somebody that doesn't know Jesus dies - listen to this - the people around them experience a two-sided grief. They grieve for the person that died because they're like, whatever, I don't know what happened. Maybe this is the end of them. That's it. Right? They just turn into nothingness - I don't know. Whatever they think. They grieve for them and they grieve for themselves. But those of us in Jesus - when we have somebody that we know that is in Christ that dies, our grief is not two-sided. It's one-sided. We don't grieve for them. I'm not grieving for Daryl. I'm grieving for me. I'm not grieving for him. He's good! I could still see the big Viking, if he showed back up here, he'd be like, what are you doing, man? I'm good! Deal with yourself.

Our grief is one-sided as believers. And that's important. Here's why: because our grief is only about us. That's o.k. for a season. But that

shouldn't last too long, because anything focused on self for too long is poisonous to the soul. That's why we've got to grieve real and long enough and deep enough but not grieve too long because our grief is one-sided. It is only about ourselves and everything that's focused on ourselves for too long becomes poisonous to the soul.

But you go, o.k., Jerry, could you explain that a little bit more? Sure. Let me give you two examples of how if you stay too self-focused in grief, how it does things that aren't good. It's not good for you. It's not good for anybody. Here's the first thing: too long in self-focused grief actually disrupts God's plan for the body of Christ. I'm going to explain to you what I mean by that. This disrupts God's plan for the body of Christ. God actually has a plan that in the midst of your grief, God is going to show you grace. And when he walks you through that, he's actually going to allow the grace that you've experienced to pour out into the hearts of other people who are experiencing grief.

Listen to what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians chapter one. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

In other words, you walk through grief, God helps you. God gives you grace in the midst of that so that you can turn around and allow the grace you've experienced to be poured out into the hearts of other people who are

grieving. It happens in this church all the time. All the time. A husband or a wife who have lost a spouse find out about somebody in our church who just lost a spouse and the minister to them with the comfort they received by the grace of God - they're now pouring some of that into the lives of these people. Young parents who have had children die at young ages in our church minister to other parents who have just lost children at young ages in our church. Why? Because the comfort that they have received by the grace of God they now begin pouring it out by his grace into the lives of other people. See this is why you don't stay in your grief for too long because if you do you've taken yourself out as a vessel to be used by God as an instrument in the body of Christ to bring grace.

But there's a second reason. If you're too long in self-focused grief, it disrupts your ability to hear the voice of God. It disrupts your ability to hear the voice of God. I'll explain to you what I mean.

I've been really encouraged by...you guys know how much I love C.S. Lewis. He wrote a book called *A Grief Observed*. Lewis was kind of a curmudgeonly kind of guy when you read all of his background and biography and stuff. And I've read tons of that. And he's kind of a curmudgeonly guy. You know, he got married later in life and up to that point he was just basically a pipe smoking philosopher, you know, that's what he was. And then he ended up finding a woman who matched him with wit, and he was like, I must marry her, right? Her name was Joy Davidman. She was very, very bright in her own right. And so they got married and not terribly long after that, with her cancer, she died. And he had experienced a love, humanly speaking, like he had never known with

this marriage, because he'd never been married before and got married late in life and then he chronicled some of his feelings and his emotions and how he viewed things and all of those types of things. And it's a really raw book but it's beautiful at the same time.

But Lewis said something in *A Grief Observed* that really stuck a chord with me, particularly along this line that we're talking about. And this is what he said - he said, "The time when there is nothing at all in your soul except a cry for help may be just that time when God can't give it: you are like the drowning man who can't be helped because he clutches and grabs. Perhaps your own reiterated cries deafen you to the voice you hoped to hear." In other words, if you're too long in self-focused grief, you only hear your own voice and you deafen God's. That's why you don't stay there forever. You have to grieve real and authentically and deeply enough but you're not supposed to grieve forever because it's not good for you and it's not good ultimately for the body of Christ.

But there's a third thing from this verse I want you not to miss. Listen - it's this: that we should worship in, and through, our grief. Listen again to what verse thirteen says. Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

You see, ladies and gentlemen, here's the thing: the contrast in this passage of Scripture is not between those who grieve and those who don't. The contrast is between those who have hope and those who are without hope.

Now, before you get confused though, this is not about those who have no hope in the afterlife. Because, by the way, even pagans created their own ideas of that. And if you look around in the world that we live in, many times what believers say when it comes to somebody passing away is no different than what everyone says. That maybe doesn't even know God or cares or whatever, or they've got some kind of other religion that doesn't believe in God, or whatever. Everybody just makes up their own deal at that point and says the same thing, right? Somebody does they give you this: Well, I'm just glad they're in a better place. Everyone says that! There's nothing inherently Christian about that. Everybody says that and creates their own meaning around it.

This isn't - when he's talking about those with hope and those without hope, it's not about those who have a hope of an afterlife and those who don't. It's about those who have hope in the knowledge of the one true God and those who do not. That's what this is talking about. Because when we have a knowledge of the one true God, we begin to understand God's character and it brings us to a place of worship, not just simple platitudes. Everything changes for us.

David was a man - you know David, right? The shepherd who killed the big guy, and then became king? David was a man after God's own heart. David knew something about the character and nature of God, because he pursued God with his whole heart. But David made some bad decisions in his life, and through some of the decisions that he made there were some consequences associated with that. And at one point, David was about to have a child, but he knew that this was maybe not going to go very well.

And the child was ill, sick, and David was on his face fasting and praying and asking God to help the child and who mercy and all those things. That's what David is doing.

And then listen to how the story picks up in 2 Samuel, chapter twelve. It says: David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead." Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. What did David do? David sought God, he fasted, he prayed, he laid on his face, then his child died. And what did he do after that? He worshiped. He worshiped in and through the grief.

There was another scenario when the people of Israel were in captivity, Babylonian captivity. Israel was in disrepair, the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and God raised up some men like Ezra and Nehemiah that ultimately led the people back in to the place where they lived and re-built it. These were people that were without a Temple, without the Scripture, without a city for a long time. In fact, a new generation had arisen during that time of exile that maybe had trouble even understanding some of the original language of their forefathers - Hebrew. Maybe didn't know how to read it really well, because they had been under captivity, and when under captivity you're forced to take on the culture and the customs of the place that you're in. That's what they did in the ancient world. And so even if they found a copy of the Scripture, they might not have been able to read it.

But then they're finally back in Jerusalem and Ezra brings out the Scripture. And he's going to read it to all of these people that have been without it for a really, really long time. Some of them that are younger, for their whole lives! And listen to what happens in Nehemiah chapter eight. Ezra opened the book. (I like how they refer to Scripture as the book). Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. And the Levites who were named Jeshua, and Bani, and all of his other friends (laughter) instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there... Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

You see, ladies and gentlemen, this is where worship leads us. That's why when we find ourselves in times of grief, we are to worship in and through because worship takes us to the other side of our grief because we find ourselves in the presence of God and in his presence there is fullness of joy. Joy. That's where we find ourselves on the other side of grief. Back to living in the place of joy. It doesn't mean that we'll always...we'll always miss that loved one. We'll always have that circumstance, right? I don't know what it

is for you today in terms of your own grief. I don't know what kind of grief you have felt or what you may be feeling.

In fact, I had a friend out of state who I recently talked to, and he was telling me about how he was grieving a change in relationship with his family, not his immediate family but a change in relationship. In other words, some things that happened in their family that meant that their relationship was going to be different forever. It's not going to be the same. And he told me, he said, you know what? I'm grieving what we used to have that we don't have anymore. Here's what I said to him. Go ahead and grieve for the life you wish you had, and then get up and live the life you do have.

Even though I think that was reasonably profound, I actually much preferred what John Piper said along this line in a tweet a few months ago. He said it this way. Occasionally weep deeply over the life you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have. That - I wish I would have said that. I was on the wavelength, but I like that better.

There are good ways to grieve and there are bad ways to grieve. What I've tried to help you with today and what I've tried to help me with today is that we have to learn some things. You see, the reason that I pushed pause on our series is because how I'm wired, I'm wired more as that apostolic, prophetic teaching kind of guy who is leading and moving us forward in the mobilization of people toward the mission of God for every man, woman, and child. But there are times where I have to stop and realize that

what we need right now is a shepherd. And that we need to shepherd ourselves through this time and through this season.

So what does it look like to grieve well, for you to have a good grief? You've got to let yourself grieve long enough and real enough. Some of you haven't done that. Some of you have stuffed some things away and did not let yourself grieve over the heartbreak of somebody dying, over the heartbreak of abuse in your past, over the heartbreak of abandonment that you've experienced, over the heartbreak of the loss of a relationship - whatever it is - you fill in the gap. But you've not let yourself actually grieve.

Do you know what will happen if you stuff that away? It will show up in your present relationships and here's how it will show up. It will show up in bitterness, in irritability, in callousness, in irritation - it's going to show up in all of those ways. You need to grieve long enough and deep enough but don't grieve for too long because when you do you're telling the world here that you don't have hope. You're short circuiting the power of God through your life that he wants to use you and your story in the lives of other people to demonstrate his grace. And you're short circuiting God's voice in your life if all you hear is your own for too long. And you and I have a responsibility in the good seasons and the bad seasons to worship our way - in it and through it because then we learn about the character and the nature of a God who loved us so much that in our brokenness he sent his Son the Lord Jesus to be our rescue, our help, our hope, our defender, our forgiver, our Lord.

And that Lord Jesus - here's what he said to us - he taught us - in this world we will have trouble. But he says to us take heart. Because I have overcome the world. This is the hope that we have that is tied up in the glory of Jesus, that we are not going to be slaves to despair, slaves to fear, slaves to grief forever. That it doesn't feel like it today, but the sun is coming out and we will experience the hope of the glory of the Gospel as we trust him in every season. Would you bow your heads with me.

We're gone in just a moment. If you're here and you've never before entered into a relationship with God through his Son Jesus, he's the one who holds the keys of life and death and the grave and what's to come. And I would hope that you would put your heart and your life in his hands. And if you've never come to experience what it means to have relationship with God through his Son Jesus - I'm not talking about that you've just been to church a few times or you've been checked off a box, or you've done some religious ritual. Jesus isn't asking about those things. It's about relationship with him where we've turned from trusting our selves in our sin and we've turned and put our faith and trust in him. If you've never begun that journey, when we dismiss in a moment I encourage you to come by the Fireside Room here on this campus. It's right out in the Atrium. It's clearly marked. Pastors, prayer partners in there - we'd love to talk to you for just a few minutes about what that looks like. I hope you wouldn't leave without doing that. And Father, for those of us, maybe in this room - we heard maybe a very specific word by your Spirit to our lives about areas that maybe we've been grieving wrongly, maybe too long. Maybe we've

been too self-focused or maybe we tried to sweep things away and haven't dealt with some things.

Father, I'd pray you help us all. I pray you'd help me. That all of us would understand what it looks like to grieve well and to grieve to the glory of God because we know grieving's a part of loving but grieving's also a part of hoping - hoping not just in something we make up in our minds but hoping in the character and the knowledge and the nature of the one true God. This is where our hope is found. So I pray that we would learn how to do that in whatever grief we've experienced because in doing that we will worship our way in it and through it for your glory. We pray this now in Jesus' name. Amen.

God bless you folks. Have a great week.