

New Beginnings Community Church

Date April 24, 2022

Speaker: Pastor Hurmon Hamilton

GRIEF AS AN ACT OF LOVE

Scripture used: [1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

On this Sunday one week after Easter, Pastor Hurmon acknowledged that we are living in a time of unprecedented grief and loss. We are approaching one million deaths from Covid, which means that approximately 9 million people are grieving deeply, in addition to countless others who have lost loved ones for other reasons. Others of us grieve other kinds of losses (broken dreams, strained relationships, unexpected trauma). Yet God sees us, and we are not alone. The question is: Should we avoid the grief journey, or should we engage our grief? The natural tendency is to avoid. Yet, the proclamation of the resurrection tells us that Jesus is alive, and because of that, we are able to grieve **with hope**. This good news is the source of strength that enables us to engage our grief, and to allow God to work through our grief in redemptive and transformative ways.

KEY POINTS

1. Our Scripture today tells us: “Don’t grieve as those who have no hope.” ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-14](#)) It reminds us that, because of Easter and Jesus’ resurrection, death does not have the last word, but God does, even in the face of death itself. In the same way, we have to look at the calendar of Easter. On Day 1, Jesus dies and is buried before sundown. On Day 2, Jesus is buried, and grief seems permanent. On Day 3, Jesus rises early in the morning. In light of Easter, how do we confront our grief? By acknowledging that we live in the confusing *in-between*. Grief is the Saturday, the day after trauma, and the day before the triumph of resurrection. We can’t leapfrog Saturday – real life is made of many Saturdays.
2. An unhealthy response to grief is to deny, minimize, blame, rationalize, distract, show hostility. Author Marisa Renee Lee writes about grief as an act of love (<https://www.marisareneelee.com/grief-is-love>). Suppressing or ignoring grief is neither healthy nor holy; in fact, [Genesis 6:5-6, NLT](#) – shows us that even God grieved when He saw the brokenness of the world that occurred because of sin. The Psalms, Jeremiah, Job – they are all lamentations to God. The searing pain of grief is a love letter to the absent, a moving testament. Instead of ignoring or suppressing our grief, we should engage with it, sharing about it with others, opening ourselves to remembrance, allowing grief to guide us to a place of thanksgiving that our loss reveals. For example, Pastor Hurmon made it a regular practice to go back to his childhood home, a shack in Coushatta, Louisiana, and to give thanks for his great aunt and uncle who adopted him..
3. Grief is never conquered. We must learn to live with loss and hope simultaneously. In the process of grieving, God will free us to move the focus of grief from burial to birth. [John 19:41-42 \(NLT\)](#): “The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb, never used before.” Jesus’ body being placed in a tomb in a garden reminds us of the possibility of something new being born from a great sense of loss, like a seed being planted. In grief, we celebrate what we had; cherish what we have; cultivate the “not yet”. We become more mindful, better stewards, and more focused on what matters - those around us, and even ways that our grief can be a part of the ministry of redemption in this world. [2 Corinthians 1:3-4 \(NLT\)](#) reminds us, “He [God] comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.” This is how we participate with the work of God’s Spirit to ensure injustice and evil will not have the last word.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What was your family culture like around grief? Was grief something that was openly engaged, or something more hidden or private? What examples of healthy and unhealthy grief have you encountered in your life?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [1 Thessalonians 4:13-14](#). What does it mean to you to “grieve with hope”? Is there a past or current loss that God is inviting you to grieve? Consider ways to inject hope and/or thanksgiving into your grief. Could that come through a ritual of remembrance or sharing of stories?
- 3) **DO** - Pray this prayer this week: God, give me the strength to grieve with the hope of Jesus’ resurrection. Find a trusted friend or friendly member to share with if there is a current grief you are bearing.