

## Who's Afraid of...Loneliness!

I Kings 19:3-18

May 12, 2019

Are you or have you ever felt lonely?  
Don't worry, you are not alone!

Have you ever heard of two lonely people by the names of  
Eleanor Rigby and Father McKenzie?

The Beatles made them famous with their song, "Eleanor Rigby"  
on their *Yellow Submarine* album.

In the beginning of the song they ask a question that we are  
asking ourselves today:

***"All the lonely people, where do they all come from?"***

Eleanor Rigby must have worked at Father McKenzie's church.  
We meet her *"picking up the rice in the church where a wedding  
has been, she lives in a dream."* I wonder if her dream was  
would she ever have a wedding of her own?

We then discover Father McKenzie, *"writing the words of a  
sermon that no one will hear, no one comes near."* Don't worry  
Father Mac you are not alone in that loneliness!

The next thing we know *"Eleanor has died in the church and was  
buried along with her name...nobody came!  
Father McKenzie wipes the dirt from his hands, (ashes to ashes  
and dust to dust kind of gesture) as he walks from the grave...no  
one was saved!"*

Then the song ends with two questions about lonely people:

***"All the lonely people, where do they all come from?"***

***All the lonely people, where do they all belong?"***

Are you afraid of loneliness?  
Don't worry you are not alone!

How ironic it is that we live in the most connected world ever and yet we are the most lonely people. People use to live in a society of front porches, community gatherings, and extended families. Today, through technology we have become disconnected, mobile and lonely.

The Cigna Insurance Company conducted a survey and discovered that most Americans regularly experience loneliness... a lack of meaningful connection or relationship with others. Loneliness is not the same as social isolation. Some surveys suggest 50% up to 75% of Americans experience loneliness.

Are you afraid of loneliness? Don't worry, you are not alone. There are health concerns associated with loneliness. The insurance company discovered an increase in cardiac issues and disease as well as premature mortality...is that a fancy way of saying, "giving up on life?"

There are three major times in our lives where we are more prone to feel alone. These three lonely times are when we are in our 20's, 50's and 80's!

If you are in your 20's you are making decisions that will have a huge impact on your life...career, marriage, where you want to settle.

If you are in your 50's you are having the classic, "mid-life crisis." You are realizing there is more to life than your career. You realize that your life on earth is getting shorter. Your bucket list is still unfulfilled.

If you are in your 80's you are sensing a loneliness of helplessness...physically and emotionally. You may have lost your spouse and not have many friends left and your family may be up North and/or not near by.

You and I are surrounded by lonely people. They come in all ages, from a child walking into a new school, an employee walking into his/her first day on the job, a couple moving into a new neighborhood, a widow walking into their first day of an empty house, a person on the street with no one to listen to them...just to mention a few of the "all the lonely people." Where do they belong?

Are you feeling alone? You are not alone!  
No one is immune from the fear of loneliness. Even godly people sometimes feel and experience the darkness of loneliness.

We are going to take a look at a guy who felt it. He was a powerful man of God and yet he felt loneliness to the point he was ready to give up on life. I want us to walk with him during this deep hole of loneliness. We will see what got him there and who and how he got out of the hole of loneliness.

How many of you have heard of Elijah?  
Elijah stands out in the Old Testament as God's most dramatic, forceful prophet. He provided a miracle of cooking oil for a widow and raised her dead son back to life. He stopped the rain, challenged a king face to face, produced fire from heaven, ordered hundreds of false prophets executed and accurately predicted the day when a three year drought would end. (I Kings 17-18)

You would think Elijah would be far from being lonely. What happened to get him to where we found him in our bible reading?

He was afraid and ran from his home town. vs. 3  
He left his loyal and trusted friend/servant and isolated himself. The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes experienced the meaningless of living alone...isolating oneself. (Ecclesiastes 4:8-12). His equation was two are always better than one.

You and I are designed for companionship, not isolation. We are wired for intimacy and not loneliness. Some people choose isolation thinking they don't need people or can't trust them. We are not here to serve ourselves. We are here to connect to Christ and serve him by serving others. Connection not fear, mistrust and isolation.

Elijah was exhausted and defeated. vs. 4 He cried out in his loneliness of exhaustion,

***"Enough! I just want to die!"***

Elijah was completely discouraged, defeated and wanted to just be alone and give up on trying to live any kind of life worth living.

Exhausted physically and emotionally he collapsed under a tree in a desert place. vss. 5-8 God saw him and came to him in the midst of the loneliness of the desert place.

God saw Elijah and began to meet Elijah's physical needs. He fed him and provided water. He then encouraged Elijah to get some needed rest. He repeated the process again...food, water and rest.

Elijah got up, well nourished and took a long journey. He ended up in a cave on Mt Horeb. This is the same as Mt. Sinai. This was a holy place. It was the mountain where God met Moses and gave him the 10 commandments years earlier. (Exodus 19:20)

God asked Elijah, ***"What are you doing here?"***

I would imagine this was more than a logistical question. I would tend to believe God was wondering what Elijah was doing hiding in a cave in his loneliness.

I don't believe this is where guys got the idea of having a "man cave." Although a "man cave" is a place where we go to be alone and isolated.

Elijah whined, ***"I am the only one left!"*** He complained that he was the only faithful follower left. He felt alone in his faith and commitment to God.

A prophet's job was often to confront the people and not comfort them. He held the people accountable to God's will and not a coddler of their self-desires. He was hiding in his cave feeling all alone.

God told Elijah to go to the entrance of the cave and He would come by for a visit. God didn't show up in the earthquake, wind or fire. Do you remember how God made His presence known to Elijah?

A whisper!

A gentle whisper...a quiet voice! He didn't yell at him in a powerful earthquake voice. It was in the stillness of a whisper that God made His presence known to an alone Elijah!

In **the stillness of "being,"** Elijah experienced God. It was not in the busyness of doing but in the stillness of being quiet before God.

Elijah knew that the sound of that gentle whisper was God's voice. He realized that God doesn't reveal Himself only in powerful miraculous ways.

More often than none God will speak to us in those moments of our being still before Him. He desires us to come out of our caves and listen and experience His quiet whisper of assurance and love. In the busyness of our connected lives we need to power down, disconnect and be still in the presence of God...to hear His voice in His word, the bible, prayer, mediation, creation and others.

Are you listening for God in the stillness of life? Are you willing to step out of your cave? Or are you telling God, "I'm the only one who gets it...no one gets me or cares any more!"

Elijah tried that one with God. God assured him that there were over 7,000 like-minded followers. Elijah wasn't alone. There were people he didn't even know about who were faithful followers. Elijah was not alone, even though he thought he was.

We have around us what the Apostle Paul called a "***faithful remnant of grace.***" (Romans 11:1-6)

God's grace is there for those who feel lonely. God's grace reminds the lonely that they are not alone. There are grace-filled followers who will be there for one another.

Elijah ran...isolated himself...didn't have proper nutrition or hydration. He let outside circumstances and people dictate him. He hid out in a cave of fear and isolation.

Elijah allowed God to minister to his physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Elijah listened to the still voice, the gentle whisper of God and he obeyed.

We noticed how much Elijah's needs were met by a loving and grace-filled God in his time of loneliness crisis.

God desires to do the same for us. In our times of loneliness and despair He wants to give us what we need to rise up and not run away. He calls us in a gentle voice to come out of our cave and allow His remnant of grace to be there for us. Amidst the chaos, loudness of life, the false connections of our culture that is happening around us to still hear God's whisper, "***You are not alone!***"

We are to allow God to use our loneliness as a motivation to commit ourselves anew to His grace and love and live a new life in Christ! DON'T sit under a tree of despair any longer. Don't stay hidden in your cave. Don't run from the One who can help you be you in Christ. You don't need to face your battles of life and loneliness on your own. There is One who fought them for you on a cross and won!

There is one more lonely person I want you to meet and discover how this guy overcame his loneliness of stardom.

Have you ever heard of Dan Peek? Perhaps you may remember the band he was a lead guitar player and songwriter for...America!

Along with his wife, Cathy, they wrote a song titled, "**Lonely People.**" He shared in an interview that he wrote the song after thinking about what it would be like to wake up and not know anybody. Let me share the lyrics with you and then why he later rewrote the lyrics.

*"This is for all the lonely people thinking that life has passed them by,*

*Don't give up until you drink from the silver cup and ride that highway.*

*This is for all the single people thinking that love has left them dry.*

*Don't give up until you drink from the silver cup and ride that highway."*

Why did Peek rewrite the lyrics of the song?

In an interview he shared how he lived the life of rock and roll success. He did the drugs, alcohol and sex tour for years. He walked into the star's life of loneliness. He was a rebel.

One day, in his million dollar home in Malibu, his tree in a desert place, he cried out, "**I'm empty! God I need you!**"

God heard him and answered him.

A few months later his million dollar home was destroyed by a forest fire. The band had disbanded. He and his wife had nothing.

Day by day God began to lead them through it all. He became a carpenter and Christian song writer. He rewrote the lyrics to his song, "Lonely People" as a witness to what God had done in his lonely and empty life.

*"This is for all the lonely people thinking that life has passed you by,*

*Don't give up until you drink from the silver cup and give your heart to Jesus Christ.*

*And this is for all the single people thinking' that love has left them dry,*

*Well, He's on His way He's coming back someday, He's coming back to take us home.*

*He'll never take you down or He'll never give you up,  
But you'll never know until you try."*

Are you feeling loneliness? Don't worry you are not alone! God loves us. He won't give up on us. He is there for us if we are willing to be still and to hear His whisper. His love is for all the lonely people who think life is just passing them by.

God calls us to use our loneliness to go to stillness in Him. He then calls us to live out our renewed purpose. To be a part of that faithful remnant of grace to all the lonely people...the Eleanor Rigby's, the Father McKenzies.

It is hard for someone to live without feeling connected with others, no matter how young or old they might be. We are to be there to connect to the disconnected and have a meaningful connection with them...to connect them with Christ.

God comes to us now and asks, **"What are you doing here?"** Let Him nourish you and send you to be His grace to all the lonely people. Where do they belong? Connected to God's grace through Christ Jesus. Get connected to Jesus and be His connection to all the lonely people.