

Thoughts of Jesus

The Lonely Man of Nazareth

HOW seldom we think of the loneliness of Jesus. We read about Him teaching the multitude by the sea, on the hilltop, in the Temple. We note that even as He walked from village to village He was not alone. The disciples were with Him; the sick and distressed pursued Him.

Nevertheless, after a closer inspection of His life we shall see that Jesus was the loneliest of men. Most truly He was not of the world. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." John 1:10, 11. He was indeed a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth.

Have you ever lived in a foreign land? You cannot understand what the people are saying. They think you are odd and peculiar. They smile as you have difficulty in making your wants known. Because of this handicap you feel weak and ineffective. You are an outsider. Outlandish is the word that best pictures your plight. But suppose you learn to speak the language, dress in the native garb, live as the people do, and still they look upon you as one not of them—a foreigner. You may mingle with the people, yet there is not that comfortable feeling of being among your own, who receive you as one with them, and who give you sympathetic understanding no matter what you say and do. None but those who have passed through such an experience can know the depths of loneliness.

Under these circumstances home beckons with a radiance such as you never realized before. It is the place where you long to be. You dream about it night and day. You see father and mother seated beside you at the table spread with food that refreshes because it is the kind you are used to. You think of the scenes along a village street or a country lane where you played as a boy. Oh, how you'd like to go home! But that cannot be. And then what loneliness sweeps over you.

Think you that Jesus never thought of home? Home—where the angels adored Him and He communed with His Father face to face. Home—where the wants of His sensitive nature could best be met. Home—where no tear fell, where suffering was absent, and where life was sweet. Home—where the struggle against sin and temptation was unknown. Yes, the Man of Nazareth must have thought often of home!

The most lonely place you can find is the crowded streets of a great city. People press against you and hurry on. None nods recognition. None shows any interest in your welfare. Thus it was with Jesus as He went up and down old Palestine. He was there to bless others, to give the needy a kindly look and the helpless a healing touch. But who looked upon Him with tenderness? Who ran out to give Him a drink?

One would think that the little group of disciples who were closest to Jesus, upon whom He spent so much time and affection, would comprehend and appreciate His mission. But how often they failed to give Him sympathetic understanding.

One time toward the close of Christ's ministry, when He was greatly troubled in spirit, He invited three of His disciples to go with Him to a remote place to pray. The disciples seemed unaware of His struggle of soul, nor were they conscious of the wonderful privilege that was theirs. When Jesus went apart to pray they slept. But when they suddenly awakened they saw Jesus wrapped in the glory of heaven and two men talking with Him, whom they recognized as Moses and Elias. Being unconscious of the significant and wonderful happenings, Peter, "not knowing what he said," idly remarked after the glory had departed, "Master, it is good for us to be here." Luke 9:32, 33.

How lonely Jesus must have felt when the glimpse of His heavenly home disappeared, and He was left with those earthly friends who were so slow of understanding.

But later He was to have an experience that brought Him even greater disappointment and agony of heart. That was in those last hours before His betrayal, while He was wrestling out His soul problem with God in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter, James, and John again were with Him. He had told them of His coming betrayal and death. Now that His hour of suffering had come, He asked them to pray with Him. But they little understood how much He needed their sympathy and support. As He returned from His first season of prayer and found them asleep, with sorrow He rebuked them, saying, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?"

Now He knew that He could expect little help from earthly friends. As the Scriptures had prophesied, He must tread the wine press alone. (Isaiah 63:3.) No man has ever been so lonely as Jesus was that night. The leaders of His people had rejected Him as an intruder. One of His disciples was about to betray Him. And His closest friends on earth seemed wholly unaware of His inward conflict.

There are other experiences that reveal how little these men who had lived with Him and studied under Him as the master teacher comprehended His life objectives. At the close of His teaching work, when He was giving His disciples one of His last discourses, He referred to His Father. As He did so Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father." This request seemed to come as a surprise to Jesus, for all along He had made it known that He was in their midst revealing the Father.

With what a pathetic sense of failure He replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how says thou then, Show us the Father." John 14:9.

Again, at the very time when He was to depart this life and return to His home in heaven, how utterly disappointing to Him must have been the words of the disciples, "Will thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel." Acts 1:6. Surely He had made it plain that His kingdom was not of this world, and that His was a spiritual mission. But He could wait no longer, for the time had come to leave them. He could only hope that after His departure they might better understand what He had said and done.

One thing He had done. He had opened the way of salvation for lost mankind. But what little evidence He had that day that His efforts had been successful. Except for the fact of His personal triumph over sin and the grave, there was little to encourage His heart as the result of His thirty-three years of sojourn among men.

The dark shadow of loneliness hovered over Jesus all through His life. We are told that in His youth "many avoided Him, because they were rebuked by His stainless life," and that His brothers and village companions -were impatient at His scruples, and pronounced Him narrow and strait-laced." The Desire of Ages, page 89.

"Through childhood, youth, and manhood, Jesus walked alone. In His purity and His faithfulness, He trod the wine-press alone, and of His people there was none with Him." - Ibid., page 92.

"No one upon earth had understood Him, and during His ministry He must still walk alone. Throughout His life His mother and His brothers did not comprehend His mission. Even His disciples did not understand Him. He had dwelt in eternal light, as one with God, but His life on earth must be spent in solitude." -Ibid., Page 111.

"His sensitive nature was tortured, His motives were misunderstood, His work uncomprehended."

How revealing are the words: "Jesus walked alone in the midst of men.... He had dwelt amid the love and fellowship of heaven; but in the world that He had created, He was in solitude." Ibid., page 422.

This is the picture that we have of the lonely Jesus. Are you ever lonely? Jesus understands and cares. He knows your heartaches and disappointments. He notes your sorrow when friends and loved ones depart or fail you, and longs to fill the void with sweet companionship.

Jesus knew the bitterness of seeming failure as He beheld His weary and bewildered flock; He knew the agony of hesitation when the cup trembled in His hand. Think you that you are as alone in your trial as He was in His? Never! For the loving, faithful Jesus is always near, waiting your beck and call. "Behold, says He, "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20. What glorious assurance for the lonely!

WHERE JESUS REIGNS

"Where Jesus reigns there is no fear,
No restless doubt, no hopeless tear,
No base deceit nor faithless prayer,
No angry strife or weak despair,
No greed for gain nor selfish pride,
No bitterness for aught denied,
No evil tongue, no cruel arm,
No envy, hate, nor wish to harm,
No wicked lust nor trace of stains,
But all is pure where Jesus reigns.

"Where Jesus reigns there is no night,
For He is wisdom, love, and light;
No raging sea nor tempest dread,
But quietness and calm instead;
No anxious care, no blind unrest,
No heavy heart by guilt oppressed,
No discontent, no gloomy days,
But highest hope and sweetest praise;
No stumbling oft nor galling chains,
No shame nor sin where Jesus reigns.

"Where Jesus reigns there's joy untold,
There's wealth that's richer far than gold,
There's service glad and courage true,
There's power to be and strength to do,
There's sacrifice and sweet content,
There's grace divine in mercy sent,
There's triumph over self and sin,
And blessed peace abides within;
There's truest faith that never wanes
There's love supreme where Jesus reigns."
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