

WSS, Part 12
Week 5
Saturday

Joy and Sorrow, Sorrow and Joy
Sherry Kendrick, Guest Writer

Today's Treasure

*You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Psalm 16:11

I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.

Jeremiah 31:13

In this space between, I have learned that joy and sorrow can exist side by side. You really can know and experience both at the same time. This has been one of my biggest realizations in grieving.

I can rejoice in the birth of my grandchildren and still shed tears that they will know not their grandfather.

I can enjoy family vacations with my children and grandchildren and rejoice at the special memories we are making and still wish that their father could do the same.

I can enjoy worshipping freely with my church family and still miss watching Mike serve communion.

I can enjoy traveling with friends and family to see things I have waited until this season of life to see but I am saddened that Mike is not with me to do it.

I can simply enjoy this day and the plan and purpose God has for me in it and yet wish Mike were present in it.

How can joy and sorrow exist side by side? Because...

"Joy is not the absence of pain and sorrow, it's the presence and purpose of Christ in our sorrow and suffering."

Susan Hunt

The joy I experience flows from knowing the steadfast love of the Lord, the life-giving breath of the Holy Spirit, and the love of His community which convinces me of His presence every day. His steadfast love and the enabling of the Holy Spirit and serving His community give me purpose to fill my days. I know fully that He is with me and not absent in my sorrow. I can run to Him when I am sad, jealous, or selfish and ask Him to meet me and understand what others really cannot.

The book that has helped me most in grieving is written by Cameron Cole who lost a child to death. The book is titled, Therefore I Have Hope: 12 Truths that Comfort, Sustain, and Redeem in Tragedy. I highly commend it to you.

In the chapter on Joy, he says,

“In my Worst, I found that joy came from two primary places. (1) intimacy with God and (2) seeing Christ’s redemption and healing in my life. I found intimacy with God by seeking closeness in my relationship with him. I sought to know him more deeply through prayer, praise, fellowship, and Bible reading. I wanted and needed to experience His presence. Because you can find joy in closeness with God, this means that you can experience it, regardless of your circumstance.”

In this space between, I have found this to be true. Joy comes as I seek intimacy with God. Joy comes as I watch for those ruakh, breath, moments from the Holy Spirit. Joy comes in the presence of the community where I am cared for and where I serve. Joy comes as I realize repeatedly that God is indeed keeping His promise to be with me, and He is redeeming and restoring both my sin and my sorrow.

To commemorate the anniversary of Mike’s death, my children and I met in the memorial gardens where Mike’s ashes are interned. I had struggled for weeks in the Kingdom of Me-Dom as the date approached and I tried to intentionally decide how to spend this day. I woke up in the middle of the night with one of the Holy Spirit's promptings with the idea of doing just a simple family remembrance in the memorial garden. I called my children to see if they would hear my need and they did. My daughter and I went to the memorial garden and faceted my sons and their families. We read the scripture we used at Mike’s funeral. We played the songs we sang that day. We recalled funny stories about their dad and important things about him that we miss. We read a liturgy from Every Moment Holy and we prayed. It was sorrow and joy, joy and sorrow all mixed together. Most of all, it was worship “in the living room” together that reminded us of God’s great redemption for their father and for us.

To Think About: Think about the quote from Susan Hunt above. Are you finding joy in the presence and purpose of Christ during your grieving?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for redeeming all things, including our sorrow. May we find joy in our relationship with you no matter what the circumstances surrounding our grief.