



Season 1, Episode 5: "When Your Holiday Isn't Happy"

I want to open the podcast today with this passage of scripture from Ecclesiastes. It might be familiar to you. It starts out like this, "For everything, there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal. Time to break down and a time to build up. A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together. A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. A time to seek and a time to lose. A time to keep and a time to cast away. A time to tear and a time to sow. A time to keep silence and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace." That's Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

I start off with that today because we are in the busiest season of the year– November, December, the holiday season. Last week on the podcast, we talked about the breathing room and how we need that breathing room with Jesus, especially when we've got days that are so filled with so much more in our lives and so many good things and good times that just fill us up with joy but also leave us feeling somewhat overwhelmed. Well, there's another kind of overwhelmed-ness about this season that I want to address in particular and really give it the honor and respect that it deserves, because, not everyone is having a happy holiday season.

Right now, I'm thinking of my friend who has just buried her husband after a long illness and another one who's just buried his wife after a very sudden stroke, and then one who buried her young child and many more who are in the fight of their life battling cancer and still others. One friend in particular who is battling a really, really deep, dark depression right now. I'm sure y'all have friends too that are grieving and hurting. The holiday season is going to be dramatically different and painfully hard for them. They might put on a happy face, but I assure you they feel a deep, deep pain and sorrow walking into this new normal and it just feels so wrong.

So just be aware, be compassionate. Think of them. Remember them when God puts them on your heart in some way. When you see them, you'll watch your words. You don't really even have to say anything. A hug and a kiss and a cup full of tears speak a language all their own, a language of the heart that can be felt and not heard. All the first time events after we lose a loved one are just bitter hard. People are apt to think that after a few years will just get over the pain of that loss. Anyway, I'm here to tell you that at my age, I know that you never get over it. Oh, you learn to live with the new normal, and by God's grace it gets

easier to do so, but you never get over it. You never get over the absence of those loved ones who were once so very alive in your life.

It's been 32 years since my cousin took his life at 16 years old. My aunt and uncle have never gotten over it. None of us have, but they have lived into the new normal by God's grace and the love of many who have come alongside with comfort. I heard a story, someone told me a long time ago about elephants and how they travel in a pack. When one of those elephants is injured, two others will lag behind and press in alongside that injured elephant and they will walk with her until she is strong and able to keep up with the rest of the pack. So, just be sensitive to that y'all. You can be that person that comes alongside in this painful season because not everybody is having that happy Thanksgiving or happy Christmas or happy Hanukkah or happy anything that you're having. It's a season full of joy for so many of us, but it is a season full of sorrows for others that are just learning to walk again, live again, breathe again and experience some element of joy again in a season that is so obviously absent of the ones we love.

I want to speak especially to those of you who are heading into this holiday season in a really hard and sad way. I want you to know that I have been there and that I understand, but more importantly, the Lord is there. His arms are around you and I pray that you have just the most palpable sense of him near you, because he so favors those who are suffering and he is there.

Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and he saves the crushed in spirit." Gosh, there was so many times, so many mornings when I was going through cancer treatment that all I could do is come downstairs and prop up two great big pillows in the corner of my sofa and just curl up and rest my head back and just think of God holding me in his arms. I couldn't pray. I couldn't speak. I could barely breathe. I know it's like that for a lot of people who are suffering right now. I've seen it, I've lived it. I know that when we don't have the breath to utter a word of prayer, that we can rest in his arms, the arms of the one who breathes over us with his love.

That breathing room with Jesus that we talked about last week? It's for you too. All you have to do is inhale.

I hope that the message of the breathing room has really helped you to breathe your way through this holiday season no matter what your season is like. I want to close with this from Psalm 33: 20 - 22. "Our soul waits for the Lord. He is our help and our shield for our heart is glad in him because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love oh Lord be upon us even as we hope in you."

That term steadfast love, it's a beautiful word in the Hebrew language, *hesed*. The *hesed* love of the Lord is a love that *never lets go*.

OK, that's that for that. And don't forget that you are greatly and dearly loved by The King!
xo -P