

What Really Ministers to Loneliness?

Tim Conway | *illbehonest.com*

Tim: You know the thing about this subject is that you all can relate. Well, wait, is there anybody here that can't relate? Is there anybody here that's never experienced loneliness? Nobody's raised a hand. So, ok, if you've all experienced it, define it for me. Lack of companionship. Now, is lack of companionship loneliness? Not necessarily. Is it related? It's related. Or is it that loneliness may have different types of meaning? Like I was thinking, some of you that have ever read Tolkien, you may remember a "lonely mountain." What does "lonely mountain" mean? It's by itself.

Have you ever - some of you maybe, perhaps have seen the message that Charles Leiter did on the loneliness of Christ? Have any of you ever seen that message? What do you think he meant by that? If you've listened to it, where did Charles go with that message? What did he mean by the loneliness of Christ? Maybe right in line with what Ken just said. No companionship. How did Christ not have companionship? I mean in what way was He void? How was Christ lonely? There's nobody who could be sympathetic with Him, because nobody else was like Him. Nobody else was headed down a road - you remember when He's trying to tell His disciples about the fact that He was going to Jerusalem and there, He was going to suffer for sin. What were they doing? They were arguing about who was going to be the greatest. When He's in the garden sweating great drops of blood, what are they doing? They're barely able to stay awake. The idea was that He had nobody sympathetic. He was alone with regards to anybody else who could identify with His situation.

Now, typically, when we think about loneliness, what are we thinking about? Are we thinking about: there is nobody else who can identify with me? Perhaps. But what do we typically mean by loneliness?

(from the room) Lack of attention?

Tim: Maybe. But I can tell you this, there are people in this world who we might call "loners," who like to be alone, and when they're out watching the sunset - I mean, there's lots of times I can remember growing up and being in the woods hunting all by myself - maybe a few creatures of God's making are roaming around out there. But I'm far outside of earshot of any human being besides myself. And I didn't feel lonely. And yet there are people who are married, and yet they feel lonely. There are people in a crowd - you can have somebody go to a fellowship and experience loneliness.

So what do we mean? What happens when we feel lonely? Notice that. Notice the word I'm saying there. We feel. It's got to do with how we feel so much of the time. It's subjective. Right? Loneliness is subjective. You can take a person and put them out in a barren place and they don't feel lonely. And you can put them in a crowd and a person can feel lonely. It doesn't have

to do with whether they're among people or not among people. Now, it can be related to that undoubtedly. The loneliness of Christ - nobody was able to sympathize. Alone. There's an idea where you don't have somebody sympathetic, and there can be a loneliness in that sense that nobody else can identify with the situation that I'm in. And there's definitely a connection with the kind of loneliness that we feel. We can feel like there's nobody to communicate with; there's nobody to get close with; there's nobody to fellowship with; there's no companionship. There was no companion of Christ that was His equal or that could sympathize or that knew what He was going through. There was nobody for Him to relate to. That's the idea. And loneliness is that. We feel that. A wife can feel lonely even though she's married to a man. Why? Because she feels distant. She feels like there's no communication. She feels like there's no companionship there.

Isn't it amazing? God made us social. Have you ever thought about how amazing it is that we can even feel lonely? We can feel that. God made us that way. God made us social creatures. I doubt that there's a loner on the face of this earth that truly desires to be isolated and exclusively without any interaction with other people. Now they may say it. They're trying to protect themselves. They may say they like it, but I don't think there's anybody that really likes it. I believe God has made us social. Because the greatest loner in here didn't raise his hand when I asked if there was anybody who's ever felt loneliness or hasn't felt it. Nobody raised their hand. Now maybe somebody's not just wanting to be brought to attention here, but I think the reason nobody raised your hand is because you're all being honest. You've all experienced loneliness. And the thing about it is it can be one of the sorest trials that God can put His people to. Loneliness can be a trial of immense proportion.

And so I want us to talk about loneliness tonight. How do we deal with it? How do we deal with it if we're the one feeling lonely? How do we help others who are feeling lonely?

Let me ask this. What is it that truly ministers to loneliness? Because you can be in a crowd and be lonely. You can be married and have kids and be lonely. So what is it that really ministers to loneliness? What ministers to it? Tell me from your own experience. Everybody here is admitting to having felt and experienced the difficulty, the trial of loneliness. What is it that actually helps? What is it that alleviates it? What is it that causes it to go away? A listening ear. So somebody willing to invest time in you. Quality time. Because to have a listening ear means what? What does a listening ear indicate? What does it communicate? You're willing to carry their burden. Somebody cares. So it's got to do with relationship on that level, right? That somebody actually comes along who shows you that they care. So in other words, bodily presence doesn't make loneliness go away necessarily. It's somebody who cares. It's somebody who loves you. It's somebody who invests in your life. Right? Somebody you know who's thinking about you. I mean, my wife likes that. She just likes to know I'm thinking about her when I'm not with her. Because isn't there a loneliness in that?

I was just heading out the door today and Letty and Jordan were walking by. And I was telling them about when I was just down in Corpus Christi on Saturday night. I mean, some of the most

hellish things were bombarding me when I was down there. And the thought crossed my mind: Oh no, I wonder if nobody's praying for me. And then today I looked at all my emails and it was interesting how many of the people - I had bunches of emails from being gone over the weekend - and how many of the people said they were praying for me. That matters. To know people are thinking about you; to know that people love you; to know that people are willing to lend that ear or to invest or they care. I mean, can you imagine people behind the scenes - like the Apostle Paul who you knew were willing to be thrown into hell for you? He wished himself accursed and cut off from Christ. There's something about that. Loneliness - so much goes hand in hand with just feeling that you're forgotten. Right? Nobody's thinking about you. To have that feeling - nobody really cares about me. But now let's make a connection here that as a Christian, is that true? "For He careth for you..."

You know, during those three years that I was single, although loneliness was probably the most bitter trial that I endured through those three years, and the sharpest loneliness that I have experienced in almost the 25 years that I've been a Christian - I also had seasons of the greatest closeness to Christ. And there's nothing comparable. No relationship in this world can compare to that. And here's one of the things. As much as I want to stress that we need to have our eyes open to those who are lonely, and seek to minister - like I know James, I can see him right ahead of me - but I know James went and got married. He knew what the single life was like. He went and got married. And on a regular basis now, they're having people over to their house and they're showing hospitality. You know if you've come through those lonely years that's a good way to respond. We need to be mindful. We need to be thinking about who those are that will be lonely and help to bear the burden, help to come in and alleviate that loneliness.

Remember, love is going to do that. Love is going to treat others the way it wants to be treated. And because you've all experienced loneliness, I just want to say this. There is a real tendency to the self-pity I think that Martha brought up. You know what happens? I can remember this. I can remember that one of the young people in the church, he was feeling lonely. He was feeling self-pity. He got sick. And he went and spent time with his former girlfriend who's lost. I said, brother, what are you doing? He said well, nobody in the church ever made soup for me when I got sick. And I said to him, brother, when's the last time you made soup for anybody in the church? He never had. And you know one of the problems that can happen especially when we have a church full of single people? Not exclusively, but lots of single people? Is you can get all the single people on a self-pity binge where nobody's thinking about anybody else because they're thinking: I'm lonely. Woe is me. And you're going along and you're thinking about what other people don't do for you, when probably one of the greatest ways out of loneliness is not to wait for other people to come along to you. Now, they should. We do have a responsibility to one another and we need to be seeking out one another. But if you're in a situation where you're lonely, rather than allowing self-pity to rule the day, take that loneliness - much the way Ruby and I can remember back - and we're not in a good place, I know, with regards to the hospitality thing. But I'm hoping, Lord willing, my responsibilities in Austin are going to be alleviated and I'm hoping that Thursday nights are going to very quickly become one of our nights that we can begin to reach out to people more that way.

But, I just want you single people to be thinking that if you know loneliness, you've experienced loneliness, don't let that hurt; don't let that experience drive you into the realms of self-pity. Let it drive you to show compassion to others. Let it drive you in feeling your own pain from it to go do what this guy didn't do. I mean, rather than feeling the self-pity that no member of the church ever made him soup, let it be a trigger in your own mind: I ought to make soup for people when they get sick. You might find that the visitations that you receive from Christ in the midst of keeping His commandments very much akin to like John 14:23 when He's talking about manifesting Himself; making His abode (v. 21, 23 there in John 14). But what's it connected with? Keeping His commandments. It's doing the things that please Him. Do you think it pleases Him when we pour out ourselves for others? Do you think He's likely to fill your cup so that you can minister to others as you're seeking to pour yourself out for others? Certainly, we have promises all through the Scriptures like that. And see, the thing is we can react to our loneliness in a wrong way. "Woe is me." We can react that way. And we can even deepen that loneliness by feeling like nobody else can sympathize. And look at everybody else. Everybody else gets this or everybody else gets that. Nobody's doing this for me and God hasn't given this to me. And we can compound it with self-pity. But that's not the way to respond.

You see, Paul talked about comfort; being comforted. I think we can comfort one another, and as we comfort one another, I think we can expect and experience the comfort that comes from the Lord. And as He comforts us and He comes visit us, we can again in turn seek to comfort others with the comfort whereby He's comforted us. We're learning - constantly learning and pouring ourselves out that way.

Have any of you actually been in a situation where you're experiencing loneliness, and other than somebody coming along and spending time with you, lending you an ear - which that's good and we need to be ministering to one another in that way. But let me ask you this. Have any of you experienced loneliness and ever had somebody speak truth to you in a way and biblically whereby you found your loneliness dispelled? Is there any truth that's helped any of you in the midst of loneliness?

(from the room) I've been going through loneliness in the past year. And a passage that's helped me is 1 Corinthians 7:35. (unintelligible)

Tim: Give your loneliness. But is that loneliness or that aloneness? How do you take that? When you used the word loneliness right there, how did you mean it? (unintelligible) How many have in some way or another - those of you who are single or you remember being single, how many of you have found any help in that verse?

(from the room) What was the verse again?

Tim: It was a text out of 1 Corinthians 7 where it speaks about the usefulness of being single. And Jeremy was just bringing together the idea that - look, there is the gift of singleness that's

described there. I reckon, but even if you don't have the gift, the very same thing that can be accomplished by having the gift, can be accomplished if you don't have the gift, but are single in the fact that what? Rather than giving your time to a husband or giving your time to a wife, you are able to what? In an undivided fashion, give yourself to the Lord. And if you don't have a gift of singleness but you're in that situation, it's likely going to compound your loneliness if you're really desiring to be married and you're not, that can tend to compound that loneliness. And yet, what Jeremy is saying is that it is a season that rather than succumbing to the woe-is-me attitude; rather than succumbing to the self-pity, that that is a time in life when you can be especially fruitful and give yourself to the Lord. That's what I'm wanting to hit on right now. We need to minister to one another. We need to get involved in one another's lives. We need to have an eye for the people in the church who are most likely prone to loneliness. We need to be reaching out and loving one another and doing what we ourselves would want done.

But I'm really wanting to focus in on some truth that really helps. I mean, really helps. We can often throw truth out. But, we're talking about deepest needs here. We're talking about deep longings. We're talking about deep trial, struggle, pain. Loneliness is a pain. We feel it. It cuts. It's hard to endure. And if there are truths that really help - they really help - I want to know what they are. Martha.

(from the room) I struggled with loneliness a lot. Probably the thing that's helped me the most has been Psalm 50:23.

Tim: Psalm 50:23.

(from the room) "The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies Me." Bear in mind that where I'd gone in sinful self-pity is just all about me. When I turn my mind to thanksgiving towards the Lord, (unintelligible) My thoughts aren't toward myself, but giving thanksgiving towards the Lord. That's when He comes and there's joy there.

Tim: But did you catch that? She gives thanks. What's she doing? She's communing with the Lord. And she said that's when He comes and the cloud lifts.

You see, as a Christian, we're not alone. We may experience loneliness, but we're not alone. Not only are we not alone, we have a Savior who bids us do things like this: "I stand at the door and knock." He says if anyone opens to Me, I will come in and eat with them. I'll sit across the spiritual table from you and I'll fellowship with you. "My Father and I will make our abode with you." "I will manifest Myself to you." Those texts right there ought to help you. Because when you're experiencing loneliness, you can take that pain and you can pour it out, because Jesus can sympathize. One of the ways we feel lonely is we feel nobody can sympathize. Nobody could sympathize with Christ because He walked a path no one else has walked.

But I'll tell you this about His path. Everywhere you've walked was on that path. Now His path went beyond where you've gone, but it hasn't gone short of where you've gone. Everything

you've experienced, every trial you've tasted, every bit of loneliness that you have felt, He felt. Can you imagine? I'm going to the cross to pay the massive debt owed for sin. You say something to the guys. They're arguing about who's going to be the greatest. He's going to die for them. He's going to pour out His life's blood. He's going to be crushed under the wrath of God. He's going to Calvary. He's got to go by way of Gethsemane where the very anguish of it - He said that He was nigh unto death. This thing is going to bring Him under such turmoil of soul, that even just in the garden, imagining the cup that He needs to put to His lips, (incomplete thought) God is just sustaining Him. It's the only thing that keeps His soul from separating from His body right at that point. He's under such distress, sweating as it were great drops of blood. He's not even to the cross yet. And He's telling His disciples back down the road, I'm heading to Jerusalem, and this is going to happen to Me. His God is going to forsake Him. And they're arguing about who's going to be the greatest.

Do you think that was a lonely road? These guys don't get it. These guys cannot relate. And then when He's actually on the eve of the cross, here He is and He's under such anguish. It's twisting the very inner being with the turmoils of the coming cross where He'll be poured out like water. And He looks over and there they are asleep. They can't pray. It's a lonely road. And He's gone places none of us can ever imagine. But the thing is, He was made like us in every respect and He feels what we feel. And so He can be sympathetic. See, the thing is, when your pain is most sharp, you can boldly approach the throne of grace and you can know there is a sympathetic High Priest who has felt what you're feeling, and there's help. If there's anything you ought to be able to take courage in, it's that. There is grace to help in time of need. Like I say, if you will go pour out yourself in love; if you'll think "woe is me," why doesn't somebody (fill in the blank)? Oh... maybe I should go do that. Maybe I should be doing that. (incomplete thought)

Now look, if there's an elderly widow and she just can't get out; she can't do those things, that's another thing. She ought to be a special object of the church's attention when it comes to this. But when you're young and single, you have energy. You have cars. You have legs that are strong. You can run somewhere. You can help others. You can pour yourself out for others. You can minister to others. And you know, I have it on good authority that if you pour yourself out for others, God will pour Himself out for you. Have you ever seen any promise like that in Scripture?

(from the room) I was thinking 2 Corinthians. He's the Father of mercies and God of comfort, and the reality in my life - my experience in times of loneliness is when it's like the self-pity thing too, but the most comfort I find is when I am pouring myself out for others - people who have needs or are struggling. And taking my eyes off myself and not be introspective is when the Lord has really blessed me in some supernatural way and comforted me because I'm not thinking of myself and thinking of others' needs.

Tim: I can remember those years that I got involved in Little Brother Little Sister program. I got involved with a juvenile home situation. But get involved in those things. And you know what? I

got involved in sports. There was a church league softball, church league volleyball. I got involved in that. And I got involved in as many Bible studies as I could.

You know what? I'm not surprised on Tuesday nights that the vast majority of you are single. I know why that is. Loneliness compels you to want to be where other young people are. I know. I was there. I remember the Friday night Bible study that I used to go to. I can't remember anybody in that class that was married. But that's a good way to do it. Don't forsake the assembling together of the brethren. Don't do that. You need that. When there's meetings like this, be there. I understand when people get married. They start having to work at their marriage, and they start having to raise kids that they don't come on Tuesday nights. I understand that. But this is a good place to come. But not only to receive. It's good to be where other young people are. It's good to be where other singles are. It's good to come out into social environments. But you know what? When you do that, invest your life in others. Don't be the quiet guy that stands over in the corner. I understand that some people are quiet. I'm naturally quiet. But love will invest itself in other people even if you're not the most socially smooth person. And other people will appreciate it. They really will. There are lots of people in this world that will appreciate your efforts.

But go visit the nursing home. There's Big Brother, Little Brother programs. There's all sorts of places that you can invest your lives in needy people, needy seniors, needy children, others that we talked about - the impaired, the handicapped, people that are in wheelchairs, people who are especially prone to loneliness. Pour yourselves out for others. Don't waste this single part of your life just in self-pity and "woe is me." Really take advantage; really take opportunity to get the best mileage out of this season of your life. Redeem the time, right? The days are evil. Redeem the time. Don't add more evil to it by all your self-pity.

And in all of this, if there's anything that's comforting, I mean, I find it comforting now when I experience the bitterest of trials. And I experience trials now stronger than those that I experienced back then of loneliness. But one thing that's an anchor is this truth that we've seen from Hebrews 12. His suffering isn't random. His suffering that He brings in our life has purpose. It's not just happening by chance. God is designing it with purpose. I can know that. I need this trial. Why? Because He's imparting His holiness to me. I need this to be more like Christ. I mean, if we can really come to grips with there is a Vine-dresser, and I am a branch, and He prunes. And like Charles Leiter says, the vine-dresser is never closer to the vine than when he's pruning. And if we can really know, wow, there's a hand of a God who loves me so much - remember, He's not going to withhold any good thing. any good thing. Not one. And if the greatest good thing in your life right now is loneliness, then you'll have it. If it's a husband, you'll have it. If it's loneliness, you'll have that.

You know what, as bad as I wanted to be married those first three years, I was not ready to be married. In fact, sometimes I wonder still if I'm ready to be married. But I was not ready. I'm not saying it's been easy for Ruby after those three years, but I recognize, I wasn't ready. And God recognized that. That loneliness was necessary for that given season. And so is all of our

suffering. And just to come to the place where we really recognize, wow, I have a loving Father. Remember? Do you remember that from Hebrews 12? This is evidence of His love. Not that He dislikes me, but that I am an object of His love. He says in other places the apple of His eye. We are the ones that He had His Son shed His blood for. Do you remember the argument of Romans 8:32? If you get the biggest, best, most valuable - if you get that, how is He going to withhold any lesser thing from you? He's not. And He's never going to let anything come along to harm you. Everything works together for your good. He's only going to give you good in this life.

Now, it doesn't always feel good. Loneliness does not feel good. But you know what loneliness is doing? Day in, day out? It's like those pruning shears. It's like the fire that the silver gets put into and it comes out and the dross is skimmed off. It's put back in and out, in and out, and in and out. And every time, more dross is coming off. And it's from one degree of glory to another. As that's happening and you're beholding Christ and you're being made to suffer and you're keeping your eyes on Christ and back and forth it goes. And you continue communing with Him, and even though it is a bitter trial, by degrees - from one degree of glory to another, you are being transformed into the image of Christ. And you're becoming more and more this object of His crafting and beautiful to behold. Purer and purer and purer. We don't like it. We don't like it. None of us wants loneliness. None of us wants pain. None of us wants to suffer. Why don't we want pain? Because it's painful. It hurts. And none of us choose it. We all would choose Christlikeness, but none of us want to choose the path that God has designed for it to come.

But if we can really just come to recognize, God loves me. And it's hard. It's hard. Because we look at: you're a young lady, and you see another young lady, she gets a husband. And you feel like: God loves her. Not me. But that's not true. If you're children of God, God loves you both. And the truth is that oftentimes - well, we know it. Nobody's going to say they made their greatest strides in Christlikeness when everything was good. And the reality is, as much as a godly wife is a gift of God; as much as a godly husband is a gift of God and definitely to be cherished, it may be that those of you that don't get that but get the suffering and trial of loneliness, you're making advances towards Christlikeness at a pace that other people may not be.

And in God's timing - He knows the perfect timing for all. And He knows the seasons when it's going to be difficult. But before you always see the grass greener on the other side, you do need to know that I've met more than one person that when they got married, the real trials started. So, before you think your own case so desperate and so to be loathed, I know more than one person that would love to be single again after getting married.

Anything else? Any truth that you have specifically found genuinely helpful? And you see, we talked about this, did we not? That part of loneliness is when you think everybody's forgotten you. You know the problem we have with what James just said is there's a difference when I'm at my desk and my wife comes in and sits on my lap and we have a face to face conversation. Or we hug each other. There's a difference in that and us going into this book, into one of the

Old Testament prophets and reading it. What's the difference? One's by sight. One's by faith. There's a difference. One requires faith. We need to believe it's true. But look, faith isn't an artificial thing. Faith really does lay hold on the promises of God and it believes them. So by faith, we believe. We believe that He's there and we believe that He cares. I mean, that matters. That's not useless. It's different, but it's not useless. It's not like it's of none effect. It is. And just remember this, just remember this: That even though there's a difference between believing that and having my wife come into my office and sit on my lap, it's very experiential when Jesus Christ manifests Himself to us. Somebody read John 14:21. Because I think this is really important. Because in times of loneliness, where we are lacking the companionship with other human beings, companionship with Christ is precious and it can be so real and it can be so manifest. Somebody read John 14:21.

"Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, He it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me, will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Tim: But did you see the conditions? What are the conditions of Him manifesting Himself to us? It is for everybody? What are the conditions? Say that again? Keeping His commandments. It's really important that when you're in these situations of loneliness and you're being tried by that, that you don't just fall off into sin. That you're striving to love Him. That's why I think it's so important for you to pour yourselves out - when you feel loneliness - to pour yourselves out for other people. Let that be the motivator. Let that be the impetus behind you. Let that be the catalyst that sends you in the direction of visiting others and showing love for others and seeking to alleviate other suffering, especially other's loneliness. In so doing, you're going to be doing that. Because after all, what is it to really fulfill Christ's commandments? Isn't it love? As you're pouring yourself out for other people, oh, if there's something that tends to only deepen and compound loneliness, it's when you withdraw into yourself, feel self-pity, kind of isolate yourself, and don't want to reach out and help other people. That only spirals this thing downward.

Any other truth that we would apply? Yeah, whoever waters will himself be watered. There's many places in Scripture - "with the measure that you measure, it will be measured back to you." Pour yourselves out for the hungry, you're going to cry out to the Lord, Isaiah 58 says, and God's going to say, "Here I am." Among many other promises there.

Secure and fulfilled. She's sitting at the feet of Christ. Yeah, if you're totally satisfied in the Lord, it's a loneliness killer. And one other thing for God's people, this momentary, light affliction does what? Prepares for us an eternal weight of glory. You know one thing you can take comfort with? Your suffering is momentary. Whatever you're experiencing as far as loneliness, the day is coming soon - a few more rolling suns at most - and you will be eternally fulfilled. Look, if every tear is wiped away, every tear of loneliness is included. There is no loneliness in glory.

So your suffering? It's as your life is. It's a vapor. I know it seems long now. It seems sharp now. But putting it in proper perspective. Any other Scripture? Any other truth that anybody knows?

One other comment that I would make right here is I know - I love this - I don't remember the exact message, but I've heard Paul Washer emphasize the fact that our God is a jealous lover. And you know one of the things about those three years that God kind of put me in isolation? You know, I'm sure He did that to teach me to walk with Him. And I'll tell you, God will put you often in lonely places because He wants you to walk with Him and to commune with Him. And He may very specifically remove something from your life if you're investing too much in it or you have your hopes set too much on it. He will leave you in that place because He wants you to walk with Him and talk with Him and commune with Him and find your all in Him and find your satisfaction and find your fulfillment. And I really believe that during those three years, you know what, I never had a serious thought of marriage in my whole lost life. It never even crossed my mind.

The moment God saved me, I wanted to get married. But now, for three years, God left me in a situation where that wasn't the case. And I spent many a night walking lonely fields and dirt roads. I call them lonely because I was alone. Out under the moon. But oh, the free hours to talk and walk with Christ. Walking with Him. God just putting me in a place to learn to commune with Him and to trust Him. And you have to know, God is in the business of doing just that with all of His children. He wants our heart. He wants our affections. He wants us satisfied in Him. He doesn't ever want to be in a position where He's saying to His child: "Here I am," and the child is just longing - like looking over His shoulder and longing for something else and pining after, oh, I wish I had that. You know, here's God saying, "Embrace Me." "Sit down and fellowship." "Sit at My feet like Mary." "Come and embrace Me, and I will embrace you." "Come and know that I haven't forgotten you." "I love you. Come and lavish yourself in My love." And you're looking over His shoulder at some guy or at some girl or at some other situation. Let your own loneliness be a reminder - a healthy reminder - a wake up call. Let the pain of it actually produce good fruit in your life.

You say, is that easy, when I'm hurting to pour out myself for others? Well, no, I know there's difficulty there. But it's very pleasing to Christ. That's what He did. He suffered on behalf of others. While He was suffering, He gave Himself for others. And just be mindful. Just be mindful.

What I wanted to do tonight was just put loneliness on the table. Just get us thinking about it as a church that we really might try to help alleviate that suffering in one another. Father, we pray that You would give us grace to be successful in this; to be fruitful in this. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.