

“The joy of the Lord happens inside the sorrow”

I came across this quote, from Timothy Keller an American pastor, theologian, and Christian apologist, “The joy of the Lord happens inside the sorrow”, in a book by Canadian author Ann Voskamp called *The Broken Way*. It got me thinking and I decided I needed to explore this idea further.

We have entered Lent and I am weary. Weary with trying to process all we have been through in this last year - since last Lent. Maybe you are weary too. But in my own weariness, I have begun to recognize and experience comfort from a truth I had not thought about so deeply before.

Jesus grew weary. There are times when he was exhausted. And there were times when he needed to be alone in that place of weariness; to sit down, to pray, to sleep and rest from the world for a moment before he could face what came next.

Why? Because of his incarnation; because of his sense of who he was and what he was called to be. Because he was human and had human feelings. He experienced the grief and sadness of others and took it into himself and that was how he could offer glory to God and joy to others.

Jesus walked among us as an ordinary man; he could have come as a superhero who didn't need to sleep or weep, but he wrapped himself in human flesh. He is God who does this, who takes on flesh to be with us, who gets wearied and weak just as we get weary and weak. God who is always gently showing us he is holding it all together for us.

As we live through the storm of the global pandemic, we might be pulled down by the waves of home schooling, the frustration of not being able to meet with others, fears for the health of all we know and love or many other things that can batter our lives. Many of us are wearied by it all, but as followers of Christ we can know the joy in Christ and his love and care for us. Christ who knows what it is to suffer, feels that pain and loss and will take us to himself and led us on if we trust in him.

As Christians our identity is rooted in union with Christ—so we may bear the burden of someone else's pain, and if we let it into our life, it will weary us. But we can bear someone else's pain and sorrow because we have an anchor to cling to, to steady us, to make sure we don't sink under the waves as we are caring for each other during these difficult times. That anchor is Jesus. Jesus is the joy inside the sorrow.

Maybe it's important to accept the weariness. It is not a sin to be weary, to be tired, to be exhausted by all that's happening in the world. If we are weary, then it shows

we care, that we love, that our hearts are bearing problems beyond what is normal. But our weariness and weakness may also be the very place where the power and goodness of God can be revealed most powerfully.

There will be times when the world makes us weary. But Jesus, who now sits at the right hand of God, never wearies of our weariness. He is always ready to listen to our prayers and our questions and will never turn us away. He is never worn out by our tiredness. He is never exhausted by our exhaustion. He invites us to come to rest in his presence time and time again.

Jesus said “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

When Jesus rested at the well in Samaria, he was taking time for himself, taking a deep breath of the air that he himself had breathed into existence. He was waiting there for a woman who was broken and wearied by the world to come with an empty bucket and help him find water - and he helped her find so much more.

When we rest in Christ, when we drink deeply of the water of his well, then we can lift our eyes to see who else might be walking by – perhaps longing for living water or hoping for a safe space in a world that is breaking them. Our small acts of kindness may bring the joy of the living Christ into the sorrows that threaten to overwhelm them.

Hopefully the storm of the pandemic is beginning to loosen its grip – but it’s not enough to long for the storm to pass so that we can simply carry on with our lives just as we did before. In Christ the heart of our longing is for his peace not just in the future but in the midst of the world as it is now, and for the presence and power of Christ to fill us, so that even now - especially now - we can proclaim that God is good.