

## Evotional

**Sermon title: “Enlarging your soul through grief and loss.”**

**Bible passage: Matthew 26:36-46. Speaker: Neil Durling.**

**Date: 6.10.13.**

### **Message:**

**We read of Jesus in one of his most vulnerable states in the Garden of Gethsemane.** Matthew tells us that: “He began to be sorrowful [deep grief] and troubled [severely distressed].” (v.37) He had deep grief and was severely distressed. In verse 38 we read: “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” This is a sorrow that is so deep it almost kills. It isn’t that Jesus is so sorrowful he would rather be dead. Jesus has no control over this. He then “went a little farther, fell with his face on the ground and prayed (v.39)”. Jesus is not a stoic philosopher who is contemplating his fate. I believe his physical/bodily position tells us of his spiritual condition.

Whilst reading this passage I was reminded that Jesus had a life, not just a ministry. There was more to him than the three years that dominate the gospel stories. And he lost it all at Gethsemane. The volume of people following Jesus comes down zero and he is alone in the garden. This is not a spiritual Superhero with a brave face of serenity! He is pushed to the limit. So much for the idea that we will always be healthy, wealthy, prosperous and victorious – that it is always possible to have bad things removed! Jesus does not get his miracle (if it means getting what we want or looking the way we think) and we don’t always either.

**We experience grief and loss at work, at church, with our health and in our families.**

**If so, then why do we so often bury grief and loss?** I think there are a number of reasons (and you might have some more):

- **We are too busy:** We don’t actually have a chance to pause and reflect on what has happened to us.
- **We always have to improve:** There is this weird Christian theology in some circles that we must always be becoming like Jesus. This is certainly our hope, but we know that life has ups and downs (remember the sermon series on “Seasons of Faith” at the start of the year?) and grief and loss can certainly bring us down.
- **We must keep it together:** Many people feel shame: I’m not enough, I’m worthless, or I’m unlovable. So if you’re sad, feeling shame, or inadequacy, the last place to be is church. “You can’t come here if you’re sad!” So people fake it and pretend because we’re taught that good Christians don’t get hurt, confused, discouraged, fall on their faces (especially the leaders).

**Grief and loss are meant to enlarge our soul: They should lead us to a wholeness, a richness and a depth we never dreamed of.**

**Grieving empties our soul of junk and loss strips us bare before God:** In emptying, we create a holy vacancy for God, allowing God to fill our lives.

Here are two practical ways that we can allow grief and loss to enlarge our souls:

1. **Listen to the interruption with others:** Losses are an interruption to our plans. Our tendency is to ignore them. We’d do well to listen to them with others. How am I feeling? Why am I feeling this way? How has this affected my relationship with God?
2. **Learn to fall together.**

### **Questions:**

1. Out of the four areas Neil mentioned (work, church, health and family) where are you experiencing grief and loss at the moment?
2. Is there another area where you’re experiencing grief and loss at the moment?
3. Do you agree with Neil’s ideas on why we bury grief and loss?
4. Are there other reasons why you think we bury grief and loss as well?
5. What do you understand by the phrase: “Grief and loss should enlarge our souls”?
6. Practically, what does it mean for you to listen to the interruption with others?
7. Practically, what does it mean for you to learn to fall with others?

### **Prayer:**

?