

Facing Loss

Scripture Reading — John 11:17-44

You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy. — Psalm 30:11

My first duty as a new pastor in Hong Kong was to assist in a funeral service. Other funerals soon followed, and I initially struggled at empathizing with families in their grief. This was partly due to my youth, since death had not yet touched my circle of friends and family. But I also thought believers should take the promise of the resurrection to heart.

As the years passed, I realized that facing the death of a family member needs more than just a theological reflection. The loss is felt physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Arranging for a funeral is a tiring process. It's draining to deal with the financial aftermath, and emotional distress can -resurface unexpectedly—even with just an occasional realization that the person is no longer around.

Though he knew that his friend Lazarus could be raised from the dead, Jesus wept with the other mourners because he felt their sorrow. Jesus did not scold their unbelief but instead acted to affirm their faith. Even today our Lord is able to "empathize with our weaknesses"; therefore, we should "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Prayer

Lord of the resurrection, comfort today all who are facing the loss of a loved one. Help us to remember that you "will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4). Amen

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