

March 24, 2020

Dear Friends,

Over the weekend, we, and most of the world have been forced into a kind of exile. It's an exile from our lives as we have known them. It's an exile from so many people we love and enjoy. It's an exile unlike any other in modern history. And to put it in professional terms, it sucks. Once again, I am not surprised, that in his book, "Grief One Day at a Time," Dr. Wolfelt hits the nail on the head, as he talks about the experience of exile in today's meditation, - it's interesting that he talks about this today while here we all are living it. In his reflection he mentions that "nothing quite makes sense and life is lonely and hard." Some of the most amazing writings in human history have come out of periods of exile. Much of the Bible was written during the Babylonian exile, the Book of Revelation was written while the apostle John was in exile, the letters that Nelson Mandela wrote during his years in prison are full of hope, life and love. It seems that in human history, it is often out of countless dark times of separation, pain, suffering, loneliness, and abandonment, that some of the most hopeful literature, poetry, music and art has sprung forth. Dr. Wolfelt extends the invitation to look at this time of exile as an opportunity to "retreat to a place of spiritual contemplation and beauty." He says the word "contemplate means to create space for the divine to enter." I have always said that grief is a spiritual journey, which Alan (Dr. Wolfelt) often says as well. This exile that we are all currently experiencing due to the Coronavirus is a forced situation for certain, but so is all grief. We have very little choice about the situation, and yet we have a lot of choice as to how we want to navigate through it. I know many of us who are grieving quite often have a hard time praying; many of us understandably have a hard time with God after losing someone we love. Quite often grief rips apart our spiritual and religious foundations and leaves us feeling empty and abandoned. Believe it or not, this can be one of the greatest benefits of grief and exile, for when something so important and sacred to us has been deconstructed, it can actually provide for us, albeit painfully, the hidden opportunity to establish or re-establish, or find or rediscover a spirituality that is deeply meaningful and real for the remainder of our lives. This does not always happen, not everyone loses their religion so to speak, and not everyone who loses it finds something that offers new meaning and hope. But I have seen it happen more times than not in peoples' lives, and I have experienced it first hand in my own life. Much, if not most, of how we deal with this exile and our grief comes down to choice. There is a fork in the road ahead of us, as I always say, -we can get bitter or we can get better. In order to come through this without being defeated and reduced into bitter, broken people, we must continually choose to live, choose to take care of ourselves, and choose to love others, ourselves and perhaps even God. In the midst of this exile, I hope we can all "retreat to a place of spiritual contemplation and beauty." If we have closed the door of our heart to love or to God, perhaps we can just inch that door open just a bit to let God in, to let Love in. When we create a space for the divine to enter, usually it comes pouring in- for the divine is Love and Love is what will ultimately heal all of us who are grieving, all of us who dwell in exile. Love may not heal the Coronavirus, but the power of love can carry us through whatever life may throw our way.

***God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*** Peace and Serenity to you all, Kevin