

Shadows

Week 4 — The Shadow of Isolation

November 13th, 2019

INTRODUCTION [\(ME\)](#)

What's up everyone! My name's Robert, I am the middle school pastor here at the church and I am so glad you decided to take some time out of your Wednesday to come hang out with us today!

Winter Retreat Push — What is it? What are we doing? How much? When? Sweatshirts?

As you were already told during the panel, we are finishing up our series called *Shadows*. And it has been a great series, but boy am I ready for it to be done. Jeff mentioned this the other day in the office, "I have never been more excited to start a series but then also never more excited to end a series." This series has been a heavy one. For us, for you, for everyone involved. But today it ends with our last shadow: **The Shadow of Isolation**.

The Bible uses the idea of sheep a lot when it talks about us. Many times it calls us sheep in the Bible. And there are tons of different reasons why, but I think one of them is the way that sheep are attacked.

Weird I know.

But sheep you know travel in herds. Tons of sheep together, they travel around. Now when a wolf is attacking a sheep, the sheep is never attacked while its in the herd. Interesting. Sheep become prey when they become isolated from the herd. When they wander off on their own. When they separate themselves from the rest of the sheep.

I think that we are called sheep in the Bible sometimes because that is also true of you and me... The enemy rarely attacks us when we are strong and together... The enemy attacks when we are isolated and alone. And you won't even see the enemy coming sometimes maybe because you are too focused on being alone... You're focused on yourself... You're focused on fixing what you messed up...

That's when the enemy attacks.

Paul puts it this way,

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

Our fight is not against each other, sometimes it might feel that way, but our fight is truly against someone way stronger than each other — someone who knows how to attack us when we isolate ourselves — we are fighting against the spiritual forces as Christians; ultimately, our enemy is Satan.

And Satan knows how to isolate us, just like the wolf does with a sheep, and attack when we are most vulnerable.

Transition [\(WE\)](#)

But we don't want to see that happen. We see it all the time, and today, I want you to realize, it doesn't have to be that way.

If Satan had his way, you would be by yourself ALL THE TIME. Because he knows when you are alone, you are weak. That's what he wants. He wants you to believe that you have no one around you and that you have no way out of the darkness...

You're stuck.

By yourself.

But the truth is: **you are not alone in the darkness.**

Would you pray with me as we jump in today?

PRAY

MAIN BODY [\(ME/GOD\)](#)

You are not alone in the darkness. It's something that we constantly need to remind ourselves of. Because we sit in the darkness, and we look around and we don't see anyone there with us. But I can tell you this. Take some time and research how many people in the Bible struggled with depression and darkness. It will blow your mind. It actually blew my mind to see how many people really struggled with this stuff.

I think I mentioned to you that Paul, one of (if not the most famous) person in the Bible other than Jesus, struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts.

Not only him though.

Job, that's a crazy story — Satan took EVERYTHING from him, his family, his business, his friends — that dude was depressed.

Jonah.

Jeremiah.

David.

And tons more.

But there is one person I really want to focus on today, and it might surprise you, but I think this story is one that needs to be shared and looked at... And it's a story about Jesus himself. Even Jesus felt darkness around him. And this story shows such a human, hurting version of Jesus.

So this story actually comes from the end of Jesus' life. He had lived 33 years, he did 3 years of preaching and miracles — from healing blind people, to saving a girl who was about to be stoned, to walking on water, and feeding 5,000 people with just 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread — he did all of this, and in the end, Jesus knew that what he would have to do was die on a cross. And he knew it was happening soon. So Jesus decided, *You know what, I know that these next few days are going to be hard, but I need to talk to God about them.* So Jesus decided to go pray about these things. Look at this.

Mark 14:32-35 (ESV)

“And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, ‘Sir here while I pray.’ And he took with him **Peter, and James, and John**, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.’ And going a little further, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, ‘**ABBA, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.**’”

Transition ([YOU](#))

This simple 5 verses gives us a step by step guide to how to deal with whatever darkness we are going through. If we struggle with something, if we are doubtful, scared, worried, depression, anxious about something. We need to just take three simple steps that Jesus does.

I am trying to keep it short for you tonight, I am already going into my conclusion, how about that?

CONCLUSION [\(YOU/WE\)](#)

Three simple things.

Here's the first thing: **Gather Your People**.

Jesus knew what was coming. Jesus knew how hard his next two days would be. Jesus knew the darkness, the worry, and the anxiety set before him of The Cross. So Jesus wants to go to a quiet place and talk to God about it. He goes to a place called The Garden of Gethsemane.

Side note, I think we should all of a Garden of Gethsemane where we can talk to God. That has nothing to do with isolation and community, but I think there should always be somewhere we can go, into a quiet place, and talk to God. To be with him and take out the distractions of the world and listen to his voice...

Jesus heads to this Garden — but notice: **HE DOES NOT GO ALONE**. Look at the verses. **It says Jesus took his disciples**. These guys were his twelve best friends. He has been doing LIFE with these people for 3 years. 8th graders, this is the third year some of you are together in your small groups with your friends. It's like that. Jesus and these 12 were CLOSE.

These people walk around EVERYWHERE with Jesus EVERYDAY. They went groceries shopping with him, they helped him clean his house, they travelled long distances, they learned from him, they laughed with him, they cried with him when Lazarus died.

And now, they pray with him in his sorrow.

But look closer, it says, **“And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.”**

Jesus took his twelve close friends, but we see when he went farther into this Garden and his darkness, he took three specific people. Peter, James, and John — these three guys were like his brothers. Not blood brothers, but they were his closest of friends.

So I ask you, right now, **who are your Peter, James, and John?**

Who are those people that know everything about you? They know the divorce that you are going through. They know you have an addiction. They know you've been struggling with that cute guy at school that you're dating.

They.

Know.

Everything.

Keep these people close! KEEP THEM CLOSE. You might FEEL like you need to be alone or isolate yourself, but you don't. Another version of this story, in Luke, he says that Jesus only went "a stone throws distance away." Jesus stayed so close to them he could pick up a pebble and toss it at them.

Set one, you have to gather your people (find your Peter, James, and John).

But second, you need to: **Talk To God.**

Jesus in his darkest moment — The Garden of Gethsemane — he was so anxious and worried, that he actually began sweating blood while PLEADING with his father for another way. Jesus was praying SO HARD that he sweat blood. Crazy.

You see Jesus take his requests and his worries to God. He says to him, "**Remove this cup from me...**" What Jesus was literally saying was, "Dad, Father, God, if there is ANY OTHER WAY. If you thought of a new way to save all these people, if I don't have to DIE, I would love that."

Jesus wanted a way out. He was human! Humans don't want to go through pain and torture and suffering and humiliation, OF COURSE there was a time where Jesus was like, "Well, maybe you could do this some other way?"

He talked to God. He brought his friends, he brought his issues, and he LAID them down at God's feet.

Like I said, you need a Garden of Gethsemane. You need a place where you can get away from distractions, your phone, your parents, your school work, the divorce, the break up, the death in

the family — a place AWAY from all that, where you can just talk to God. A place where you can just lay out everything that is worrying you, all the darkness around you... Lay it out at his feet. Open up about it.

Once you gather your people, then talk to God, there is one third and final step...

Be Okay with God's Answer.

This one right here, it's the hard part. See after Jesus said, "God, can you take this cup from me? Can you do it another way?" He then said, "**Yet not what I will, but what you will.**"

Jesus was saying, *I know that might not be possible, so do what you have to do.* Sometimes, when we lay down our darkness, or worries, or anxieties, or struggles, or fears, or doubts, we just have to be okay with the way God works it all out. We can't control it. But He can. And he has your best interests in mind.

He will work GOOD out of every bad situation, sometimes we just have to sit back and let him work it out...

We have to **gather your people, talk to God, and be okay with God's answer.** That's the way to get through whatever darkness you are in.

We listen to a series like we have for the past four weeks — and we listen and nod our heads and talk in groups — but then we go home and say "Yeah, let **me** do this!" But this isn't a "me" thing, this is a **group project**. It's you AND me together. It's US.

This is not a fix yourself moment. This is a let me get some people around me. Whether that be friends, family, teachers, a counselor, your leader, pastors — whoever it is — you need **community**.

Who is your Peter, James, and John?

Who are your people?

You are not alone in the darkness.

Let's pray.