

October 8, 2023

Nineteenth Sunday in Kingdomtide

The Bible Tells Me So? Half Truths, Clichés, and Other Misnomers

Today's Cliché:

“God Just Needed Another Angel in Heaven”

Scripture: Acts 12:5-17 (Common English Bible)

⁵ While Peter was held in prison, the church offered earnest prayer to God for him.

⁶ The night before Herod was going to bring Peter's case forward, Peter was asleep between two soldiers and bound with two chains, with soldiers guarding the prison entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel from the Lord appeared and a light shone in the prison cell. After nudging Peter on his side to awaken him, the angel raised him up and said, “Quick! Get up!” The chains fell from his wrists. ⁸ The angel continued, “Get dressed. Put on your sandals.” Peter did as he was told. The angel said, “Put on your coat and follow me.” ⁹ Following the angel, Peter left the prison. However, he didn't realize the angel had actually done all this. He thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself. After leaving the prison, they proceeded the length of one street, when abruptly the angel was gone.

¹¹ At that, Peter came to his senses and remarked, “Now I'm certain that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod and from everything the Jewish people expected.” ¹² Realizing this, he made his way to Mary's house. (Mary was John's mother; he was also known as Mark.) Many believers had gathered there and were praying. ¹³ When Peter knocked at the outer gate, a female servant named Rhoda went to answer. ¹⁴ She was so overcome with joy when she recognized Peter's voice that she didn't open the gate. Instead, she ran back in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate.

¹⁵ “You've lost your mind!” they responded. She stuck by her story with such determination that they began to say, “It must be his guardian angel.” ¹⁶ Meanwhile, Peter remained outside, knocking at the gate. They finally opened the gate and saw him there, and they were astounded.

¹⁷ He gestured with his hand to quiet them down, then recounted how the Lord led him out of prison. He said, “Tell this to James and the brothers and sisters.” Then he left for another place.

~ SERMON NOTES ~

We struggle to explain death in general, but especially the unexpected death of a child. This cliché is our clumsy attempt at explaining the unexplainable. While it may sound sweet on the surface, it actually insults our intelligence and denies the reality of grief that is part of this life.

This particular misnomer affords us an opportunity to see how can we meet grief. There are four things that we can do as we confront the emotion of grief:

1. _____.
You can meet grief by facing it head-on. Suppressing or denying it only adds to the weight that *we carry in the heaviness of our hearts*.

2. _____.
You can meet grief by celebrating the memory of the experiences you shared with the departed person. You will find that such gratitude can be a healing balm on your grieving soul.

3. _____.
You can meet grief by dedicating yourself to doing something for others who are hurting. "When I dig another person out of trouble," says an old Chinese proverb, "the hole from which I lift him is the place where I bury my own trouble."

4. _____.
You can meet grief by realizing that life and death are journeys and not destinations.
