

We Are Not Alone

Have you ever felt lost and alone? Have you ever felt like a situation was hopeless and nothing anybody could do would change it? I know that the latest instability in the world and trying to navigate alone on my new farm with a broken ankle have certainly conspired to create a sense of isolation in my own life. Now, I do not let these feelings “win”, but they are there nonetheless. Sometimes events in our lives can make it feel as if the weight of the world is on our shoulders and the burden just feels far too heavy to carry on our own. I think the first time I ever felt this way I was only about six years old. My dog died and I felt like there was no way in the world I would ever feel happy again. There are many events in the span of a human life that can make us feel lost and beyond the reach of mercy. Sometimes we feel this way when life deals us a difficult blow or when we ourselves are somehow the cause of someone else’s pain. But, however we came to find ourselves in these places, God never leaves us to wander alone in hopelessness and despair. God does astonishing things. God transforms all things. As children of God we can rejoice in the truth that there is no demanding situation we might find ourselves in is greater than God’s power to transform it. In those times when we experience our lives as impossibly fragile or lonely God can help us. When we are blind to mercy or deaf to understanding, God opens our eyes and ears so that we might see and hear words of forgiveness and acts of kindness. When we are crippled from the pain of loss or from the dissolution of a long-held dream, God restores hope so that we can resume the dance of a life worth living. This is the miracle of our God. God breaks into our longing and our need for hope with the good news that the present reality of our suffering can be transformed. In God we have an answer to our sighing and sorrow. In God we will never utter a cry of despair that isn’t shot straight into the heart of God’s limitless compassion. In Jesus we bear witness to God’s compassion for the broken and wounded, for the lost and the floundering. Jesus Christ makes us aware of a power beyond ourselves, who nevertheless works in our midst to alleviate suffering. Jesus goes to those out on the edges of life, those who society finds untouchable, and he lays his hands on them to remind them that they too are beloved of God. Who here among us has not at some time felt cut off from the mercy of God? Who among us has not longed at some time or other for better times and brighter days? Who here among us often act as the prophets and healers who feel called to go to those in despair with God’s word of hope and transformation? I believe that we, at various times, both! We are at times the despairing, and we are at times the healers and prophets. God in Christ is still among us and God is doing astonishing things, and we are the instruments of God’s mercy in our lives and community. As those who follow Jesus and hope for the same compassion and justice, it is natural that we too suffer when the world or life doesn’t measure up. And we are also called to continue the work of Jesus. We all share in this call to take God’s message of hope into the places where people are unable to hear it for whatever reason. We transform our own suffering by taking this message to the places where people have no voice, both to the poor and the powerless and to those we know among our own family and friends who have been silenced or broken by some form of crippling despair. God gives life and that is an astonishing and transforming fact. God calls to us in those places where lives are lonely and broken. The prophet Isaiah, for example, proclaims God’s saving word that we as Christians hear echoed as the saving Word of God in Christ. Isaiah’s message of hope to a people in exile becomes the message of hope to all: God is the source of all life. This is indeed the miracle of our God. God breaks into our longing and our need for hope with the good news of Christ and the present reality of our suffering can be transformed. God is the answer to our sighing, fears, and sorrow.

Grace and Peace, Stephanie+