

December 12, 2021

*From Darkness to Light*

Dear Friends,

If I hear “*It’s the most wonderful time of the year*” one more time I may explode. Don’t you just love it when people or songs or billboards or commercials or decorations or movies or tv shows try to tell you how to feel? I just returned from a seminar about complicated grief, and as I returned, I was particularly tuned into the fact that there was no escaping the holiday music streaming from speakers in the Uber, the security lines, the shops, restaurants, and even the baggage claim. I couldn’t help but to think of those who are feeling the acute pain of loss and how difficult it is to listen to the constant barrage of “feel good” nostalgia.

I always try to encourage those who are grieving to look toward the light, whether it be the candlelight from a menorah or the flickering of a Christmas tree. We need light in our darkness, and we need to remember that our loved ones are now in the Light. But let me quote the person who gave the seminar, one I’ve quoted so many times before in my reflections, Dr. Alan Wolfelt:

**“You must make friends with the darkness before you can enter the light.** Our culture misunderstands the role of pain and suffering. We tend to promote the idea that if you’re suffering, something is wrong with you and you need to be cured. The so-called “dark emotions” of sadness, emptiness, shame, and fear are things to be hidden or gotten rid of as quickly as possible. But the truth is that pain and suffering are not only normal reactions to loss, they have a purpose. In grief, they force us to slow down and withdraw. We tend to feel tired and sluggish. This is called “the lethargy of grief.” When we allow ourselves to befriend the darkness of our grief, we give ourselves the soul and spirit time we need to regroup and renew. Only after we have sufficiently engaged with the darkness can we begin to reenter the light of hope, gratitude, happiness, joy, love and peace.” (*The Paradoxes of Mourning* 40)

I know this may not read like most of the Holiday cards you are getting, but I wanted to dose you with some reality which ironically may bring some light into your darkness during this season. Try to be a patient as you can be with where you are right now. This is your now but now your forever.

Peace and Serenity, Kevin