

March 28, 2021

*SACRED STORIES*

Dear Friends,

*“And even when you’ve become a master journeyer, and you know well the terrain of your grief, you will at times feel like you are backtracking and being ravaged by the forces around you. This, too, is the nature of grief.” (Alan Wolfelt, *Understanding Your Grief* p. 3)*

With last night’s celebration of Passover and today’s celebration of Palm Sunday, it occurred to me that both holy days are commemorations of survival through the most difficult and horrific of circumstances. It seems most appropriate to have this focus on liberation and new life while we strive to survive a pandemic and our own personal experiences of loss and devastation. These days of remembrance are sacred, and yet historically painful, reminders to all of us that humanity continues to survive, and as history dictates, even at times to thrive. Religions, and their sacred liturgies, always look backward in time and history so that we can move forward with hope and confidence.

I think it is much the same on an individual level when it comes to the grieving process, as they say, ‘we have to go backward before we can move forward.’ Our brains tend to do this, even when we don’t want to; we never know when our thoughts will jump to the bedside or the graveside or the site where the loss occurred. Sometimes we are aware of what triggers this shift, and sometimes we have no idea, but it always sucks. In early grief, our minds need to continue to go back, and this can be torturous. But I always try to remind people that it is necessary, and that although the storm is raging now, it will in time begin to subside, even if it seems like it never will. “You may feel like you can’t ‘shake’ your memories of certain moments. You may replay them repeatedly in your mind... Allow yourself this necessary rumination. Blocking it out won’t help you heal... But remember- usually grief wounds get worse before they get better. Be compassionate with yourself.” (Alan Wolfelt, *Understanding Your Grief* p. 72)

Our losses, even though they are profoundly sad, are now a part of us. A huge part of our self-compassion is telling our stories and owning our truth. Just as the sacred stories of our distant ancestors are continually being proclaimed from pulpits and temples, we have our own sacred memories and our own beloved stories. And much like those sacred stories being proclaimed this weekend, many of us are now quite familiar with the very painful and arduous process to get in touch with our own memories. Sometimes we may need help in carrying the pain, but it is important and necessary that we share with those who support us and care about us.

Peace and Serenity,

Kevin