

Sermon: Suicide: Naming the Elephant in the Room

Text: Romans 8:31-39

Date: Sunday, October 17, 2021

Preacher: Rev. Becky Stephens

It feels important today to name the elephant in the room. With the family's permission, I want to share with you what happened this week.

I wrote my sermon on Monday...then along came Tuesday.

Tuesday morning at 10a.m. I got a call to head to the family's home. He did what we were afraid of...Allen Williams took his own life.

I didn't know Allen. I met him once. But what I do know is that he became so overwhelmed by life that it was like he was down in a deep dark barrel and couldn't even see that there was a ladder and a flashlight right in front of him.

So let's talk about suicide this morning.

Most folks feel helpless/overwhelmed if they are considering suicide:

- Suicide is a permanent irreversible attempt to solve a temporary problem.
 - You don't have to die to end your pain. When you can't see your way out—choosing death is not a good option.
 - It's like using a nuclear bomb to wipe out a nest of mosquitos—irreversible consequences.

What do you need to do? CALL US!

- No emotion lasts forever. It's like waves—they crash in, but then they recede.
 - Don't make a permanent choice based on what you feel. It will not last forever.
 - Never make a big decision when you are depressed.
 - Share those feelings with a trusted friend. We are supposed to bear one another's burdens. I'm supposed to help you and you're supposed to help me when we're down.
 - People will gladly do this for you—if you're open and honest. Don't carry it alone.
- When you're feeling depressed, you are not thinking straight. Your mind gets confused.

- You may think the world/work/family would be a better off without you. That is wrong. You are a child of God—Created by God for a purpose. Your life matters. God has a plan and a purpose for your life and that plan/purpose is so much greater than your problem/emotion right now.
- You were not created to handle all the problems/pains of your life on your own. We are wired for relationships. When you share a joy—joy doubles. When you share a hurt—hurts get cut in half. We are better together.
 - First thing in the Bible—it's not good for man to be alone. We are better together.
 - Find a trusted person. Tell them exactly how you feel.
 - Depression comes in waves—but it will subside. It may come again. You need a trusted person or group (Safety net) that can help you hold your head above water until the waves subside/recede.
 - Never try and face suicidal feelings alone.
 - Remove anything that would make suicide easy—guns, pills, etc.
 - When you are feeling vulnerable—don't try and face it alone.

If you have a friend or loved one struggling with suicidal thoughts:

- If someone is talking about suicide—take them seriously.
- Notice changes in behavior—moody, more serious, sad—something's not right—ask them!
 - Is everything okay? Have you thought about hurting yourself?
- Regardless, tell them how much they matter. I will do everything I can to help you be safe—find a doctor/counselor—you may have to call 911. I'll even go with you.
- Much more important to save a life than worry about being offensive.
- There was a man who jumped off a bridge—just as he was jumping, he had a moment of clarity that everything could be fixed except 1 fatal mistake—jumping from the bridge. That man actually lived to tell about it and shares his testimony around the world.
- Twice as many people commit suicide than are murdered.
- Suicide is the #1 killer for young adults ages 15-24.
- Over 1 million people commit suicide in our world every year.
- We have to remove the stigma of mental illness/depression issues.

- It is not a sin to be sick. Your illness is NOT your identity.
- By the way, the Bible tells us there is only 1 unforgiveable sin and it is NOT suicide—it's rejecting the grace God has offered us through Jesus Christ.
- Suicide is preventable.
- When we are aware of each other's pains, when we care about each other's pains, then we carry each other's pains together.
- I believe as God watched Allen struggle with life and become so overwhelmed he couldn't figure a way out except to commit suicide—at that moment—through tears of His own, God opened his arms and said, "Come here, my son. Let me hold you."
- We hear this phrase a lot—"God doesn't give us more than we can handle." HOGWASH! So wrong! Sometimes we are dealt more than we can handle. That's just life. What that does is force us to rely on God—lean on God—not just ourselves—we can't make it on our own..
- Allen has said through his career as a police officer, "If I can make a difference in 1 person's life—that's all that matters. It was worth it all." Let's learn from Allen. Let's not let his death continue to be a silent killer in our community. Let's stop the stigma and talk about it—mental illness, depression, suicide.

This is a song that has been important to me through the years.

Lean On Me

Words and Music by Gary Mathena

When no-one cared about me, if I should live or die,
 and no one bothered asking why I'd go alone and cry;
 When burdens got so heavy that I could not face the day,
 Then I'd feel His arms around me and I'd hear Him gently say,

"Lean on Me...
 when you have no strength to stand.
 When you feel you're going under,
 hold tighter to My hand.
 Lean on Me..."

when your heart begins to bleed.
When you come to the place that I'm all you have,
then you'll find I'm all you need."

When the road ahead seems rugged and the path is getting steep,
I feel that I can't make it and my heart begins to weep.
Then I turn to see who's comin' to join me in the way,
and I see that it's my Savior and I hear Him gently say,

"Lean on Me...
when you have no strength to stand.
When you feel you're going under,
hold tighter to My hand.
Lean on Me...
when your heart begins to bleed.
When you come to the place that I'm all you have,
then you'll find I'm all you need."