

WHAT ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR - PART III

Scripture used: [Mark 10:47-49 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

In this third message of the “What Are You Searching For?” series, Pastor Hurmon focused on the many feelings of isolation, loneliness, and hopelessness that many have experienced during the pandemic and quarantine. One of the deepest needs that God has placed into every human heart is the need for belonging. Pastor Hurmon reflected on the popular songs he grew up with that speak about the “Heartbreak Hotel” of loneliness; and the sad question of “What Do the Lonely Do at Christmas?” Our Scripture tells the story of Bartimaeus, who is blind and an outcast, but - while anonymous in a crowd - demands to make contact with Jesus, and is completely transformed as a result. Bartimaeus’ interaction with Jesus contains a powerful blueprint for exiting loneliness and finding connection and even intimacy.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Britain named a cabinet-level Minister of Loneliness in 2018. This was an acknowledgment of many studies showing the pervasiveness of the problem, and its harmful impact on mental and physical health. Loneliness impacts people’s performance as workers, and their civic engagement as citizens. Loneliness is different from solitude, which can be a purposeful state of quietude and retreat. Augustine of Hippo said that the heart is restless until it has found a home (of purpose, belonging, and meaning).
- 2) When we are lonely, we often seek a remedy or cure in other places. We can misplace our soul in the process. Our feelings of loneliness are often a warning light that our need for true intimacy and belonging is not being met. Bartimaeus was an invisible man, a man who was not socially valued. He was crying out for alms to survive, but his soul was crying out for an encounter with Jesus, and what he wanted most of all was to experience Jesus and His love, to know that he was seen and that he mattered to God. The story shows that Jesus knows our names, wants us to come to Him, and wants us connected to God’s plan and purpose. [Ephesians 1:4-5 \(NLT\)](#) tells us that God loves us and has chosen us. It gives Him pleasure to adopt us in His family.
- 3) God’s invitation requires a positive answer from us. When Jesus calls the blind man, the man responds with an exuberant, “Yes!” We demonstrate that we want to discover God’s provision for us to belong. This spiritual belonging goes above and beyond attending church or going through the motions of religion. It’s about finding intimacy in marriage, family, community, and our relationship with God. It’s the answer to loneliness. For those of us who feel exposed to fear and shame, we find this deep intimacy in the presence of God. Our brokenness is atoned for and redeemed by His sacrificial love.
- 4) In practical terms, intimacy is nourished by time, talk, and trust. We are never discarded as individuals, as grace is sufficient to deal with whatever we have been wrestling with. We need God, but we also need to experience intimacy with other people. God intends for us to safely find intimacy in a Jesus-centered community. Now, in the midst of a pandemic, is actually a great time to get into this kind of community. Pastor Hurmon used the example of a group of long-term caregivers who conduct regular online meetups to pray for each other and find solace and support in each other’s loving company. We must take the next step towards deeper intimacy with our Jesus-centered community, to learn and serve, and - as a result - get into deeper engagement with God.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Pastor Hurmon shared some of the love songs he grew up with that express the pain of loneliness and our need for connection and belonging. What songs express that reality for you? How do you tend to cope with loneliness in your life in positive or not-so-positive ways?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Ephesians 1:4-5 \(NLT\)](#). As you reflect on and meditate on these verses, what promise from God is most significant to you right now? Why? When we feel challenged by loneliness, what are the messages that we are listening to, internally or externally, that drive our loneliness? How do these voices compare with what God is speaking over us?
- 3) **DO** - What is one step you can take to deepen your intimacy with God and/or others? Consider if there is a way you can close a deficit of time, talk (communication), or trust. Invite a friend to join you in watching next Sunday’s Gathering!