

"You'll be doin' all right, with your Christmas of white...
But I'll have a blue, blue Christmas."

Blue Christmas

We've all heard the Elvis Presley song, "I'll have a Blue Christmas without You." While this post is not an exegesis of that song, it shares a recognition that we all have loss and sadness in our lives.

For many people, the Christmas holiday season does not bring with it the joy and happiness that is constantly advertised on television, in shopping malls, in catalogs or in greetings cards. The constant refrain of the happiness of the Christmas Season, about getting together with family and friends reminds many people of what they have lost or have never had.

The anguish of broken relationships, the insecurity of unemployment, the weariness of ill health, the pain of isolation, the gut wrenching loss of a child, the loneliness of no longer having a beloved spouse or partner to share each day, the loss of parents and friends - all these can contribute to a feeling of being alone, of 'feeling blue' in the midst of the society around us which seems bent on 'being happy' and 'celebrating'.

Coming together, reaching out

It's at such times that we need to make the space and take the time to acknowledge our sadness and concerns. Many churches have [Blue Christmas services](#), designed to give comfort and community. If you do not have such a service, you can still recognize that Christmas is a sad and lonely time for many people by providing special prayers in your regular worship service, making prayers available for people to use at home, and making sure that those who have suffered loss or are alone receive visitors, cards and calls during the holidays.

Also consider how you can reach out to the wider community with these prayers. You might make these available on your website or Facebook page, for example.

Where can you find resources to help?

I especially liked some of the resources at [The Text This Week](#) and those from [Stephen Ministries](#).

The Psalms are an additional resource, especially, of course, the psalms of lament. Walter Bruggemann in his book *The Message of the Psalms* has three categories of psalms. One is called dis-orientation, which includes the laments. These are psalms that were written during times of hurt, alienation, suffering, and loss. They evoke questions, doubts, rage, and despair. They express feelings of confusion, bewilderment and anger. Examples of psalms of lament that speak to loss and grief include psalms 13 and 88.

Naming our loss and grief is an important part of the healing process. Anger is often present and many people find it helpful to be able to express anger at God. "How could you, God, have let this terrible thing happen to me?" Look at the structure of the lament psalms:

1. Complaint (the cry for help and a description of the distress)
2. Petition (an appeal to God for help and reasons for why divine intervention is desired)
3. Praise (ends on note of trust in God and a vow to praise God for deliverance)

Perhaps this can be helpful to people in writing their own psalm of lament, or their own prayer and petition to God.

A closing prayer

God of compassion, hear my prayer for me and my family. We live with the painful memories of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of you Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

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