

September 12, 2021

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Scripture Lesson: Eph. 5:11-20 The Message Bible

11-16 Don't waste your time on useless work, mere busywork, the barren pursuits of darkness. Expose these things for the sham they are. It's a scandal when people waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see. Rip the cover off those frauds and see how attractive they look in the light of Christ.

Wake up from your sleep,
Climb out of your coffins;
Christ will show you the light!

So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times!

17 Don't live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants.

18-20 Don't drink too much wine. That cheapens your life. Drink the Spirit of God, huge drafts of him. Sing hymns instead of drinking songs! Sing songs from your heart to Christ. Sing praises over everything, any excuse for a song to God the Father in the name of our Master, Jesus Christ.

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God!**

Message

Sing to the Lord A New Song, Part II



The New International Version of Ephesians 5:19 is, "*Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.*"

Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord!

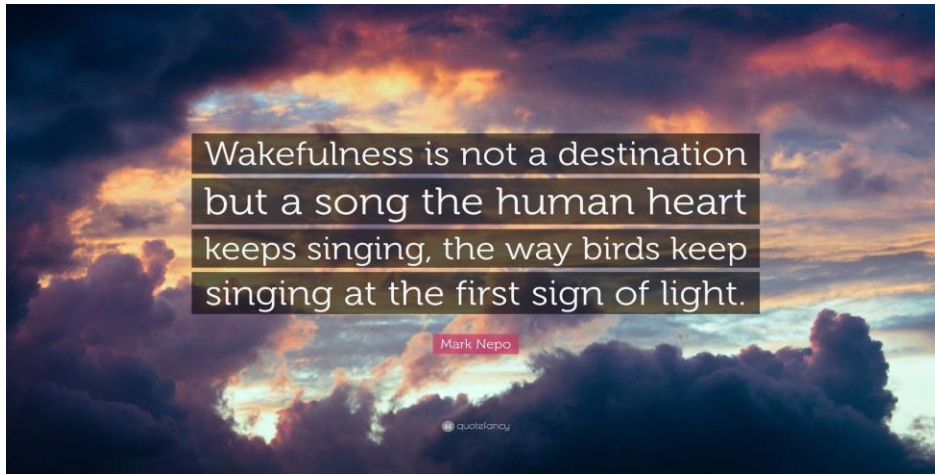
Let's come back to this.

From our scripture from the Message Bible which Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the scripture has a way with helping us to hear and see this scripture differently. Hear this verse again:

*Wake up from your sleep,
Climb out of your coffins;
Christ will show you the light!*

The Message Bible

Just when I think I am awake, I discover I am still sleep walking through parts of my life. We all have blind spots where we simply do not see things as they really are. Oftentimes, we are in denial that we are asleep in a metaphorical coffin. Let's be honest and admit it! None of us are totally and fully awake. With that said, let us ponder for just a few moments this quote:



Speaking of birds ... from last week's service, who remembers why a bird sings?

The birds sing, not because they have a statement. The birds sing, because they have a song. One of my favorite bird songs is a loon. How many have forgotten what loons sound like? Let me help you out with this short video:

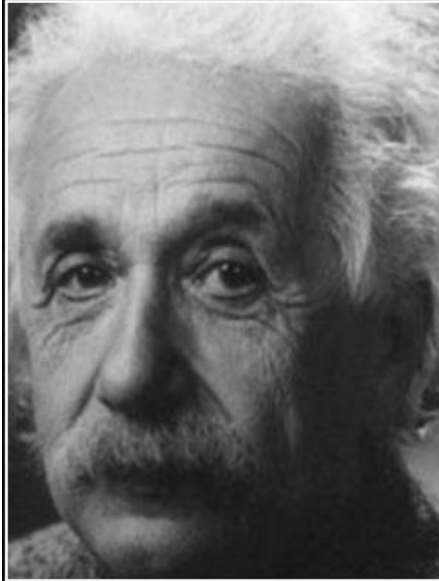
VIDEO OF ONE MINUTE

[Loons on the Lake](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2wOEP7uqXQ) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2wOEP7uqXQ>

END OF VIDEO

A loon to be a loon cannot help but sing its mysterious and mystical song. It is like the voice of our Creator calling us to *listen*, to pay attention, to see *the beauty all around you!*

For me, personally, and for many other mystics as well, life itself is not only mystical, it is miraculous. For some of my unbelieving friends on miracles, I remind them of something Albert Einstein said:



Do you believe in miracles? Well, you should. In fact, life itself is a big miracle. There are so many things that are beyond our understanding. There are two ways to live: you can live as if nothing is a miracle; you can live as if everything is a miracle.

— *Albert Einstein* —

AZ QUOTES

Which way do you live your life? Hmm ... the fact that you are here or streaming with us today makes me believe you would lean more to living your life as though everything is a miracle! Yes?

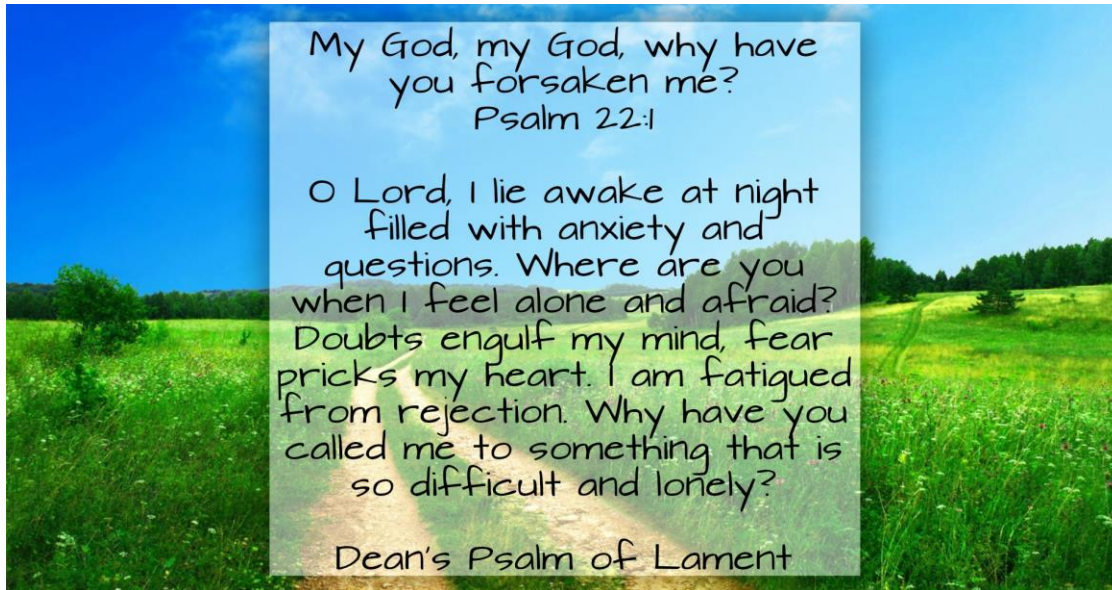
Another part of the scripture we need to hear again and again is this:

18-20 Don't drink too much wine. That cheapens your life. Drink the Spirit of God, huge drafts of him. Sing hymns instead of drinking songs! Sing songs from your heart to Christ. Sing praises over everything, any excuse for a song to God the Father in the name of our Master, Jesus Christ.

The Message Bible - Ephesians 5:18-20

What is it that keeps us from singing songs from our hearts to God? Maybe we are not in a good place with God? That is not a good enough excuse because think of the psalms of lament in our Hebrew Bible.

They were written when the author or authors were heavy-laden and burdened and not in a great place with God. From Psalm 22:1:



“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” The words Jesus cried from the cross.

At times, I can relate to this scripture as well as Dean's Psalm of Lament. How about you? This psalm of lament could very well be a part of a song to God, could it not?

Now more than ever, we need to sing unto the Lord new songs of *hope, peace, joy, love and harmony!* We need songs of inspiration which will no doubt as Aubreigh sang earlier, “*could save a life.*” We live in a time where the suicide rate continues to climb because folks feel lost and hopeless.

If you notice someone who is showing signs of losing their zest for life, reach out to them. Handouts are available on Suicide Prevention on the back table, however, let me highlight these statistics:

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States. It was responsible for more than 47,500 deaths in 2019.

In 2019, 12 million American adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.5 million made a plan, and 1.4 million attempted suicide.

Suicide rates in the United States have increased about 33% from 1999 to 2019.

This means One death by suicide every 11 minutes

This is a harsh reality, is it not?

At age 7 I made a plan to commit suicide, but something intervened and I did not go through with it. To make a long story short, I held the family Bible in my hands, and I heard this voice, *“It is going to be okay.”* A few moments later as I looked around the room in disbelief, I heard it again, *“It is going to be okay.”* I have often interpreted this voice I heard as an angel letting me know that eventually things were going to be okay. This was good news that I needed to hear. I wish I could say that things changed miraculously in my life, but they didn't. What I did have was the strength and fortitude that when I became suicidal again, I could still hear this voice saying, *“It's going to be okay.”* I have never made a plan to commit suicide since. Just so you know, I can still hear this angelic voice saying, *“It's going to be okay.”*

As messengers of the Good News, we are here to spread that Good News of hope, peace, joy, harmony and unconditional love ... God's agape love that is given to all. This unconditional love leads us into new life where we can hold our heads up high. Sound familiar? Fred Crase sang a song last week entitled, *“Hold Your Head Up High”* which was moving as well as inspiring!

If you were not here, you can go back and listen to the recording of this special music on our website.

Hear these words that Fred sang last week from *“Hold Your Head Up High”*:

*Hold your head up high
Hold your head up high
Through the light and through the shadow
I won't wait it out, wait it out
Hold your head up high
Hold your head up high*

*Biting clovers in the lawn
A solitary fawn
Underground, the new life thunders up and on.*

Underground, the new life thunders up and on.

Sometimes we feel as though we are underground which is why the scripture from Ephesians speaks so loudly:

Wake up from your sleep,
Climb out of your coffins;
Christ will show you the light!

A relatively new song came out in the 1980's where Jacques Berthier of the Taize community in Taize, France, took a very simple phrase from Psalm 103:1 and put it to music:

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless God's holy name.*

When we are feeling down, lonely, depressed, angry and sad, may we simply pray to bless God. Think about it, most of the time, we ask God to bless us, maybe we got it wrong. Maybe we need to turn it all around and bless God and when we do, it will lead us into new life!

We can sing to the Lord a new song where we not only bless God, but that God through Christ will indeed lead us into new life.

In preparation for Holy Communion, sink deeply into this scripture from Psalm 103:1. Experience how the Spirit can indeed bring us new life. Amen.

CL



Good Morning



~Psalm 103:1
(KJV)~



Bless the Lord, O my
soul: and all that is
within me, bless his
holy name.



CL