

Grief...it's a funny thing. Most often, we talk about grief when we talk about or experience death. But grief comes in all shapes and sizes, and as a result of all kinds of experiences.

Personally, I experienced grief profoundly just over three years ago when I was diagnosed with chronic migraines. By the time the diagnosis came, it was really a name for something I had been experiencing for several months. But the name brought a new wave of grief.

When I think about these last few weeks, I'm reminded of that kind of grief. It was a grief associated with an unknown future. A grief that was hard to put words to or really explain. Perhaps that is what we're experiencing now, a sort of anticipatory grief. We know things have changed, we're experiencing that each day, but we don't know just how much things will change. We can't look one week or one month down the road and know what life will look like.

And that's hard. And painful. And that is worth grieving. The details are different for each of us, but, in big and in small ways, we are each grieving the loss of something, whether that something is an experience, a feeling, or even a way of life. And, I think, in some sense, we know we aren't done grieving yet. There is still too much uncertainty.

Personally, I'm grieving the loss of race weekends. I had intended to race every Saturday of April and I was excited to experience some new race venues, reach new goals, and simply do something I love. Professionally, I'm grieving what I've come to call the "should be" moments of ministry. I'm grieving having to cancel the confirmation retreat. I'm grieving gathering around coffee at Bread and Butter each week. I'm grieving an ever-changing Holy Week experience.

And, in all of those experiences, it's unsettling to be reminded that I don't know when things will return to "normal." I don't yet know when I will race again. I don't yet know when we will return to our regular routine of worship. I don't yet know what the summer is going to hold. This was not how I imagined ministry six months into my call to FPC. And so, the grief continues.

And there's nothing that I can do to take away my grief, or yours, though, trust me, I wish I could. But I'm also reminded that we don't grieve alone. It's why I love the story in John 11, what we most often refer to as "The Raising of Lazarus." But I love what comes before. Lazarus has already died when Jesus finally reaches Bethany. He sees Mary and Martha, then goes to Lazarus' tomb with them, and there Jesus weeps.

Even Jesus weeps in the face of death.

And so, you have permission to grieve, to be angry and upset. To wrestle with what comes next. Even to struggle with daily tasks. But I invite you to take that grief to God in prayer, to know that God holds that grief and weeps along with you. And I invite you, if you'd like, to share that grief with someone (and I will happily be that someone).

We are not alone, and we will get through this, together.