KIRBSTONES
ALONG THE NARROW WAY

curb-stone (kûrb'stōn') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed, and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served [1]to hold the material in the roadbed, [2]to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and [3]to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

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13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." - Matthew 7:13-14 - NIV

There are few moments more disorienting than the sudden, unexpected loss of someone deeply faithful and deeply loved. One moment, life is ordered and familiar; and the next, the ground shifts beneath our feet. Even the strongest believers find themselves asking questions they never expected to ask, praying prayers that feel unfinished, and discovering tears that come without warning. Faith does not spare us from grief—*but it does give us a place to stand when grief arrives*.

Sudden loss is particularly hard because it leaves no time to prepare, no final conversation, no gentle easing into a goodbye. Love is interrupted. Trust is tested. And yet, God remains present, not as an explanation, but as a companion.

Consider the loss of a family member—a spouse, a child, or a parent. Imagine a faithful husband who rises one morning, makes coffee, and plans the day, only to collapse hours later and never return home. Or a child whose laughter once filled the house, gone in a tragic accident. Or a parent whose steady wisdom anchored the family, is suddenly absent.

In those moments, grief feels personal and physical. The house sounds different. Silence becomes loud. Faith may whisper rather than shout. Scripture does not rush us through sorrow. Instead, it speaks honestly:

> *The Lord is close to the broken-hearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*
> *Psalm 34:18 – NIV*

Close does not mean distant or distracted. Close means present—close enough to hear sobs, close enough to hold what feels shattered.

Others experience sudden loss in the death of a close friend or co-worker. These are the people who walked alongside us in ordinary life: shared meals, projects, jokes, and burdens.

Their absence can feel strangely destabilizing, as if part of our daily rhythm has been removed. One day, his chair is empty. His voice is missing from meetings or conversations. His friendship, so woven into routine, is suddenly only memory.

Grief in these relationships is sometimes complicated by a sense that others may not fully understand its depth. Yet Scripture reminds us that such bonds matter deeply to God. Jesus wept at the death of his friend Lazarus, even knowing resurrection was coming. In that moment, he revealed God as One who honors love and loss. As we grieve friends and colleagues, we cling to this promise:

> *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*
> *Matthew 5 - 4- NIV*

Comfort does not erase our sorrow. It promises that our grief is not in vain, but seen, honored, and held by God.

Then there is the sudden loss of a parishioner—a fellow worshiper, teacher, servant, or quiet presence in the pew.

Often, these losses ripple through the congregation. The familiar face is gone. The voice is silent. The faithful servant who quietly embodied Christ's love is no longer there. Congregational grief carries a communal weight.

We grieve not only the person, but the role that person played in shaping our shared life. In such moments, we are reminded that we are one body. When one part suffers, all suffer. Paul's words offer steady ground:

> *If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*
> *Romans 14:8 - NIV*

This assurance reminds us that death does not sever our belonging—not to God, and not to one another in Christ.

In all these losses questions inevitably arise. Why now? Why so suddenly? Why one so faithful to God and to the kingdom? Scripture does not provide easy answers, and faith should not be used to silence honest grief. Lament is not a failure of faith; it is an expression of it.

What faith does offer is hope shaped like a promise, not a platitude. The Christian hope is not that we will avoid sorrow, but that sorrow will never have the final word.

Resurrection has the final word. God's future has the final word. Love has the final word. We believe that persons who die in Christ are held securely in God's care, even as we struggle to hold ourselves together. In time, sorrow may soften. Memories may bring gratitude alongside tears. And faith will continue its work in us.

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