



REFLECTIONS

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Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."

Luke 18:31-33

Journey into Solitude

It felt like a great celebration, Jesus astride a donkey entering Jerusalem's east gate to waving palm branches and shouts of Hosanna. Only Jesus knew better. For him, it marked the final stage of his journey into solitude.

Solitude. Think about what it means. No. Think about what solitude *is*. Solitude is more than privacy. We seek privacy at times to be with one's self. But solitude is not a place one is likely to choose to be for long. Isolation, separated from all human beings, and from life's surroundings. Solitude strips one to the bare bones into the natural state with no makeup to help look better or to hide the blemishes and scars of a fallen soul. Solitude exposes imperfections; it shames and disgraces. Solitude strips naked, removes protection, and exposes unrighteousness. Solitude uncovers filth, reveals corrosion, and emits the stench of decay.

Silence is a part of solitude, for solitude separates from all connections, not just people. Silence amplifies solitude's uncomfortable state. It's reason for joggers to play music through their earbuds, or people to pipe music throughout their homes, or to leave the TV on when no one is watching. Silence penetrates deeper than quiet. Quiet includes nature's sounds—breeze rustling through leaves, water rippling down creek beds, birds chirping from treetops, and ocean waves splashing on sandy shores. Quiet means peaceful. But complete silence, like solitude, is disturbing, not peaceful.

In solitude hope is lost, and like Adam and Eve, the first instinct is to cover the shame from disobedience. Solitude is a place no one wants to be—like Hell is.

The nails were painful, scourges agonizing, thorns and human spit humiliating. Death seemed better. But solitude—the dread of it left blood dripping from Jesus' brow as he prayed, "*Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me.*"

On the cross Jesus entered death's most dreaded state. In gasping breath, he cried, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*" to no answer. God wasn't there.

Solitude—Darkness—Silence—Death—
All in place of me.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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