

Abide With Me

But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. Luke 24:29 NRSV

A few days ago, Kate Jones, one of our worship leaders, sang "Abide With Me". Some of you will remember that old hymn. For others of you the archaic phrasing of the lyric and the slow and gentle tune "Eventide" push the old hymn down to the bottom of your playlist. I confess, Abide With Me is not one of the hymns I tend to hum or whistle, however, it is a hymn I remember my grandmother singing. Late in her life, my grandmother lost her vision, and that was devastating to her as she loved to read, sew and play bridge. The loss of her vision did not diminish her desire "to go". She could grab her hat and pocketbook faster than you could say, "Where did I leave my car keys". I assure you she would be in her place on the backseat before any of us could climb in behind the wheel. Of course, grandmother was ready for Church every Sunday morning.

I remember one Sunday in particular. Grandmother was sitting beside me and she rose to stand as the first few notes played from the organ. Without missing a beat, she began singing,

*"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide; the darkness deepens, Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee; Help of the helpless, O abide with me."*

She sang the whole hymn, never missing a word or a note. Grandmother was blind, she lived in darkness and that had to be frightening. She often needed help, yet she never acted helpless because she knew that her Jesus was the "Help of the Helpless". She was not alone. She understood the true meaning of "abide". Jesus was always with her. He was as close as the beating of her heart.

We don't often use that old verb, "abide", anymore. It has a double usage. We can abide with; remain or stay with someone, or we can abide in ; dwell or reside in something. The hymn lyric is a prayer, a petition to Christ to stay with us. Yet there is the implication that we will reside in him as well. To abide in Jesus is to reside in him and he in us. When we abide in Jesus, we are with each other -- as close as our heartbeats.

In these strange days of distancing, we need to remember that we are not alone. Christ is with us; He abides in us.

Prayer: Help of the helpless, abide in me. Amen.

Christ be with you, always,

Rev. Dell King
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