

10/2/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Why is it that many combat veterans are often eager to rejoin their units even when it means exposing themselves to more danger? Why is it that citizens of London who lived through The Blitz in WWII often look back on that time with nostalgia? Why is it that people sometimes remember living through natural disasters with more fondness than they do weddings or tropical vacations?

These are questions that set the stage in a book released in 2016. The author of the book is a journalist by the name of Sebastian Junger. The title of his book is *Tribe*. It's a compelling read. In his book, Junger makes the case that a significant reason why many have been willing to embrace periods of danger or hardship or disaster is that during those extreme periods they experience something they crave.

What they crave is a sense of belonging. And so it is not the danger or hardship or disaster in and of itself that they seek. Rather it is the intense bonding with others that these periods of extreme difficulty often create.

For any number of you reading this, perhaps this does not come as a surprise. Because you are in a place in your life right now where you feel so isolated, so detached, so lonely that you would be willing to endure some danger and some discomfort if you knew it would give you a profound sense of belonging.

Sebastian Junger's book points out a problem in our society. For all of our conveniences, for all of our creature comforts, for all of our instant communication, we are lonely people. But this problem is not just a product of 21st Century life. The root of the problem is ancient. The

root of the problem is sin—yours and mine. And sin's natural self-absorption not only isolates us from each other. Far worse, it isolates us from God.

And so God chose to bring our isolation to an end. Jesus came. Through his life and death in our place, he annihilated the walls of our sin—the walls that had separated us from him and from each other. Now, through faith in him, we belong. We belong to him. We belong to each other. *None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone...whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Romans 14:7-8*

Want to savor this bond of belonging that you have? Find a challenge to tackle with some fellow believers. You'll find that, in Jesus, you have never been alone.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, in you I belong. I belong to you. I belong to my fellow believers. By your gospel, empower me to seek opportunities to savor this present reality in my life. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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