

ONLY THE LONELY

Larry Greenfield, Sioux Falls College

"Each place I go, only the lonely go,
some small cafe
The songs I know..only the lonely know
each melody recalls a love that used to be
the dream I dream, only the lonely dream
that hopeless scheme, only the lonely scheme."

Whether it be Frank Sinatra--stool, cigarette and drink included or Paul Desmond blowing a haunting ballad on an alto sax with Brubeck at a midwestern college or a moody Miles Davis--on or off horn---expressing they are all heirs of blues--which have and are still telling to no one in particular, the loneliness of life in a world where only death is sure.

Literature, art, drama...sociologist, theologians, psychologist...preachers, laity; teachers, students---all have caught the mood, the pervading spirit of our times: loneliness and death.

Loneliness and death, taxed to all men, even causally related, for loneliness is one's fear of his own death and the fear, of the death for everyone and everything.

Loneliness and death are the most fundamental rejections of meaning, the ultimate, and God. And the biting question of our day is not whether man is searching for Freud's happiness or Jung's power--it is whether there is any meaning now. The repressions and fantasies are still factors to consider, but most important to the man of the present, every man, is meaning. The meaning-less hell that knaws at man that confronts him with separation--that only the lonely know. And every man is lonely.

We shove it from our minds, we push it out of our consciousness, we try to release it by filling the void with work--or some of us with liesure--but this is only an expression of death--the bondage to creation.

There is the bar at the corner--where with a drink, we drink to death, the question that must be asked.

Join a club, or play bridge, or get a hobby, or watch T. V.--to elude the question that must be asked.

Get a buzz by sex and spend the few seconds in ecstasy, and then let the sleep come quickly, so the fatigued body can rise to ask the inescapable question.

See an analyst, find a mate, pick Peale and think positive, pity yourself, pray, kill yourself--and after that see if you can put meaning in what ever you did.

Take Joe, who works at the office, its a good job and Joe has a nice family. Although he plays poker with the boys every week, his real hobby is hunting and fishing. Caught in the routine of daily life, Joe has begun to see the loneliness and lack of meaning in the routine. No matter how hard he forces himself to his work, no matter how many rod and gun magazines he reads, no matter how lucky he is at the weekly poker party, no matter what he does Joe cannot escape the sense of separation and loneliness that is apart of his life. If Joe is a courageous fellow sooner or later he will have to look at himself, for no matter how much he tries to live by pointing out the worst in others because he senses they provide a threat to his own

existence or how he sees himself as the criterion for the good man he still has to face the fact that Joe is capable of the bad he sees in others. The loneliness causes him to see the worst. When this point comes Joe is no longer concerned about what he is for, not even what he is against--but what he is.

But the loneliness that Joe senses and the self evaluation that takes place is that which in the end binds all men, that is all men are lonely, including Joe. This is Joe's and yours and my common bond--and it is the point at which we recognize that all of us are capable of the good and the bad.

But to sense one's own loneliness is by no means any kind of final answer. To wander through life telling to oneself and to everyone that you are lonely, that there isn't any meaning, that all that has breath is wrapped in futility is only to give a presentation of the obvious. To recognize the loneliness and futility is only to tear down the systems, the quick answers, the tranquilizers which have been constructed in the search for meaning but which eventually fail. Fail because they start outside of where man is; outside his inherent predicament. To recognize loneliness and meaninglessness is to tear away the unstable foundation and to begin anew, with the raw materials of life--men separated by their self-hood, yet together in a common predicament. It is at this point, when man starts where he is, with other men that communication can take place. And when communication takes place with sensitivity of the other predicament as well as one's own, meaning takes place in some spontaneous way.

This is the great stay of the blues...a lonely sax..then a trap set, a piano, and then a trumpet--each expressing deeply their own loneliness, their own bondage. And then something happens, the sax listens to the others, and they to him and soon they move together, one calls and the other answers, till they swing--and to swing is to affirm. If the sax had chosen to just express his own loneliness and the others the same, only noise, confusion, and meaninglessness sound would have resulted. But if the sax becomes sensitive to the others and they of him there comes the great affirmation of the pulse of meaningful life.

This is the basis of the Christian life--the realization that the messiah was lonely--that he lived the meaningless life like everyone else we'd even call him a flop at 33 by our standards and in doing so he established the bond that binds all men--that is his death, the ultimate expression of his loneliness became the resurrection because the bond had been established. The Christ was lonely and sensitive, he died yet he lived--as if he found the beat, he gave, but in his giving he found the bond that affirms.

Boris Pasternak speaks of this in his book Dr. Zivago when he says Rome was a flea market of borrowed goods and conquered peoples, a bargain basement on two floors, earth and heaven, a mass of filth convoluted into triple knots, as an intestinal obstruction....heavy wheels without spokes, eyes sunk in fat, sodomy, double chin, illiterate emperors, fish fed on the flesh of learned slaves...And then, into this tasteless heap of gold and marble, He came, light and clothed in an aura, emphatically human, deliberately provincial, Galilean, and at that moment gods and nations ceased to be and man came into being...

This is the story of great art, great drama, of great literature...of great life. For in the end we are not justified by god's or nations, by bridge clubs or analysts, in the end we are justified by sensing our own loneliness, by establishing a bond with all mankind, and moving meaningfully with that bond.

Only the lonely know, for only the lonely know.