



Peace At Last Ministries (PALM)

Sharing God's comfort with the terminally-ill, their loved ones and caregivers.

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Paul & Kathleen Humphreys

“Come close to me.” Genesis 45:4

Just four words... but oh how life-changing for those who heard them!

The object of hatred and jealousy, the Bible records the life of Joseph, how his brothers sold him off in his teens to a life of slavery in Egypt never to be seen again. Or so his brothers thought. Some three decades later and as second in command over the most powerful nation on earth, Joseph found himself in the very presence of his cruel siblings. While revenge was in easy reach, an amazing higher purpose unfolds.

The story grips our emotions as we see Joseph trying desperately to hold back his tears. Finally, he reveals his true identity. The shocking revelation leaves his brothers both stunned and terrified.

Then came those four words. Among other things, they contravened the protocols of Egyptian hierarchy. It was unthinkable for a commoner to get close to such a high-ranking official. To disregard such boundaries meant instant death. Yet Joseph utters those most unbelievable and gracious words his brothers could ever wish to hear,

“Come close to me.” Genesis 45:4

The scene that follows evokes an alphabet soup of emotions; shock, hugs, tears, disbelief, fear, joy. It was a pivotal, life-changing interaction.

Like a scratched LP record [I'm dating myself here], these four words, *“Come close to me.”* keep playing over and over in my head these days. Maybe it's because they stand in contrast to our current COVID-19 social-distancing protocols; 'closeness' has become taboo. But Joseph's four words remind me of a much greater reality, one that feeds my soul. Here's why.

In scripture, Joseph is often portrayed as a type or picture of Jesus Christ. Like Joseph's brothers, I have offended God; my sins against him are many. I deserve to be eternally distanced from my holy Creator. He has every cause for rightful revenge against me. Amazingly Jesus went to the cross and took my punishment for my sins in my place. I believe this. And now, I hear his life-changing, soul-feeding words, *“Come close to me.”*



This is the heart of God and his 'gospel,' his good news for sinners. Instead of hearing, "Keep your distance!" or "Depart from me!" we hear words like,

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28

Our dear Lord in effect whispers these same words to you and to me today, "Come close to me." He desires that we draw near to him, to learn and to experience his amazing grace in our lives. He wants to remind and reassure us of the eternal hope we have in him even now in the midst of our political upheaval, economic uncertainty and COVID-19 turmoil. In short, our Savior desires to feed our souls with the living, life-changing knowledge of his loving presence at the deepest level. Let's hear his words today,

"Come close to me."

I also can't help but think of the Lord's similar words in Revelation 3:20.

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Revelation 3:20

While this verse is often mistakenly used as an invitation for unbelievers for salvation, the promise is in fact for us who already believe in Jesus Christ. He desires that we respond to his knocking at the door of our hearts and minds by believing his promises, by taking him at his word, by holding fast to all that remains true and unchanged. It's a moment by moment closeness, one exercised by faith in God's goodness. God's response, in turn, is guaranteed,

"Come near to God and he will come near to you." James 4:8

No masks required!



Ever grateful for your prayers, support and friendship,

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul".

Paul (and Kathleen too)



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