

Words of stability and hope (John 14:15-21)

God promises never to leave us alone.

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Over the last two decades in Sweden, a growing number of refugee children from war-torn countries have been suffering from a debilitating disorder called resignation syndrome. The 2019 documentary *Life Overtakes Me* catalogs their hardships.

While their parents apply for asylum and the children struggle to heal from the trauma they've experienced, their bodies begin to shut down. When the prospect arises that asylum will be denied and they will have to return, they stop eating, drinking, walking, and caring for themselves. Soon they enter a catatonic state as a somatic form of self-protection.

After all they have been through, their little bodies cannot cope with the possibility that something will happen to them or to their parents again. The road to healing requires prolonged exposure to security, predictability, and stability. Sometimes it takes three months, other times more than a year.

God knows what happens to us when our souls are shaken. After washing his disciples' feet in John 13, Jesus says, "Little children, I am with you only a little longer." Enter anxiety, uncertainty, fear.

A chapter later, none of these feelings has dissipated. Jesus knows what we need, and to the worried soul, the troubled heart, the fearful child of God, he offers a word

of hope: "I will not leave you orphaned." Security. Predictability. Stability. *You will not be left alone. The Spirit who is your Advocate will be here soon to supply your need. Resurrection is coming. Because I live so also you will live.*

In the reading from Acts, Paul rests secure on the stability of his identity as a resurrection believer, even though this means rejection by many of his hearers. The writer of 1 Peter calls the church to rest secure in the stability of its identity as a people raised with Christ, baptized to new life through the resurrection of Jesus. Care. Love. Family. Security. Especially in times of uncertainty.

In some of his darkest and loneliest days as a prophet called to "redeem the soul of America," Martin Luther King Jr. would often quote from a hymn that anchored him in the promises of God. This side of Easter, perhaps it can anchor us as well:

*I've seen the lightning flashing
And heard the thunder roll,
I've felt sin's breakers dashing,
Which tried to conquer my soul;
I've heard the voice of my Savior
He bid me still fight on:
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.*