

My Loved Ones:

God says to us in James 4:8 - "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

We're going to talk today about a hymn that has come out of an epidemic, quarantine situations and social distancing.

Cleland McAfee (not Cleland Willis :-)) was pastoring a large Presbyterian church in Chicago. News reached him that diphtheria had just taken the lives of his two beloved nieces. With the fear that diphtheria might reach him and his immediate family, but also with the great sense of heartbreak of his own nieces being taken, Cleland sat down to write poem; not only did the words come to him, but he sat down at the piano, and wrote the music, too! He needed something to remind him of his need for comfort as well as for comfort for the rest of the family. But everyone was in quarantine during the epidemic outbreak. Cleland was not stopped, though.

After the double funeral, Cleland went to the house of his brother, Howard, in quarantine. He stood outside of the darkened house and sang the song with choking voice. The following Sunday, the choir sang it before Communion. Another brother, Lapsley, was so impressed by the message of the song, that he carried it back to his own pastorate in Berkeley, California.

Difficulties can grab us and almost drag us away from walking closely with God. But we are to do exactly what James 4:8 says. Basically, we're as close to God as what we want to be. May we all desire to be close with God. We must walk closely with God.

Difficulties can make us restless and beat us up. We need comfort, real rest, joy and peace. But there is only one place to get it - meeting with God. What was the hymn?

There is a place of quiet rest, a place where sin cannot molest.  
There is a place of comfort sweet, a place where we our Savior meet.  
There is a place of full release, a place where all is joy and peace.  
Near to the heart of God.

As we face this pandemic, quarantine situations and social distancing, may we remember that others have faced such difficulties, and God has brought blessings out of it all. When we need comfort and encouragement, may we remember, that we are as close to God as what we want to be. Loved ones, let's get close to the heart of God.

Praying for you all today. May the Lord be with you in special ways.