

Sorrow comes to all

“In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all; and, to the young, it comes with bitterest agony, because it takes them unawares.”

- Letter to Fanny McCullough

As a first of what I intend will be many writings on *A LOG about Lincoln*, I begin with a matter that most of us try to avoid...or forget.

Lincoln was clearly a person familiar with grief and sorrow; he ultimately lost three of his four children to premature death,

and in political life, experienced the death of literally thousands in the Civil War.

In the chosen quote above (an excerpt from a letter to a bereaved woman), he expresses the particular condition of sorrow in the life of “the young”. I believe that Fanny was the daughter of a father lost in the war.

To be solaced by the words of one who knew sorrow – as Lincoln indisputably did – is all the more meaningful because it comes with empathy and experience. His words of comfort are not simply platitudes derived from someone’s training, but come from the deepest place or heart. He is speaking about his own experience or remembrance.

As I viewed several Lincoln-related programs on PBS recently, each program noted the aging of Lincoln during his first administrations. Perhaps partly an illusion due to the quality of photography at the time, **his aging was still quite evident** having left his countenance with a beleaguered impression. Yes, cracks and crevices in his cheeks but, even so, the expression of one who was dealing with a burden well beyond imagination – let alone experience. Some would call this (aging) the price of politics...or something like it; but could Lincoln have been spared such a future – such a plight? I don’t know, but will say that, because he suffered much, he was able to better understand the suffering and sorrow of others.

The prophet Isaiah speaks a prophetic description of Christ as “one familiar with suffering”. From *The Message*, chapter 53:

He was looked down on and passed over, **a man who suffered**, who knew pain firsthand. One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, thought he was scum. But the fact is, it was our pains he carried—our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed. We’re all like sheep who’ve wandered off and gotten lost.

Of course, Isaiah is speaking of Jesus in this prophecy; he is describing the savior who will suffer such that all men may have salvation. Had Christ not suffered then how would he know what we, the creation, must go through in this fallen world; and had he not suffered on the cross, would we have any chance of salvation...the resurrection body?

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Lincoln – Sorrow comes to all

No, we would not; and neither would Lincoln have been able to truly understand the losses of others without the experience of his own.

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