



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

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Program 11 – "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down" © 1969 Kris Kristofferson

Johnny Cash charted a hit with this number in 1970, when it won CMA's award for "Song of the Year". Ray Stevens actually recorded it first (in 1969) with moderate success -- #55 on the country charts and #81 in the pop Top 100. In 1971, when Cash sang the song live on his television show, *Johnny Cash and Friends*, the show's executives demanded that he change the lyric, "wishing, Lord, that I was stoned," in order not to offend family audiences (How times have changed!), but Cash sang the line exactly as it was written (source: Wikipedia). Cash's life was a roller coaster of emotions and self-destructive habits, but when he became a Christian, he was not shy about telling others. The author of "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down", Kris Kristofferson, while not generally known for a profession of faith, penned some songs with Christian themes. Examples include "One Day At A Time", which can be found in some modern hymnals, and "Why Me?" which expresses unworthiness of what the Lord does for us. "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down" paints a vivid, sensory picture of loneliness – a dire longing for dear things lost, or long gone. If you could write a "scratch-and-sniff" song, this one would feature the aroma of fried chicken, and of dirty clothes reeking of stale cigarette smoke, sweat and alcohol. You can close your eyes and almost hear the clattering of a can being kicked, a little girl's gleeful laughter, and the echoing peels of a distant church bell.

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." – Prov. 22:6

Clearly, there are things about Sunday mornings past that tug at the heart of the man in this song – perhaps even from childhood.

Well I woke up Sunday morning,
With no way to hold my head that didn't hurt.
And the beer I had for breakfast wasn't bad,
So I had one more for dessert.
Then I fumbled through my closet for my clothes,
And found my cleanest dirty shirt.
An' I shaved my face and combed my hair,
An' stumbled down the stairs to meet the day.

- Classic description of a hangover
- Addiction of alcoholism
- The fellow apparently lives alone

I'd smoked my brain the night before,
On cigarettes and songs I'd been pickin'.
But I lit my first and watched a small kid,
Cussin' at a can that he was kicking.
Then I crossed the empty street,
'n caught the Sunday smell of someone fryin' chicken.
And it took me back to somethin',
That I'd lost somehow, somewhere along the way.

- Same places, same streets, but two different worlds: Saturday night vs. Sunday morning
- Same man, yet now different: life has changed for him over the years, but not for the better

On the Sunday morning sidewalk,
Wishing, Lord, that I was stoned.
'Cos there's something in a Sunday,
Makes a body feel alone.
And there's nothin' short of dyin',
Half as lonesome as the sound,
On the sleepin' city sidewalks:
Sunday mornin' comin' down.

- Ours has been called the "lonely society"
- Some have indicated that 75-90% of adult Americans suffer from chronic loneliness (<http://www.christinyou.net/pages/loneliness.html>)
- Why would Sunday morning seem so lonely or oppressive to this fellow?
- *"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—"* – Colossians 1:21-22

In the park I saw a daddy,
With a laughin' little girl who he was swingin'.
And I stopped beside a Sunday school,
And listened to the song they were singin'.
Then I headed back for home,
And somewhere far away a lonely bell was ringin'.
And it echoed through the canyons,
Like the disappearing dreams of yesterday.

- Haunted by memories of what Sunday apparently meant to him long ago

When I was very young, on Sunday mornings, my Dad would walk me the four blocks from our house to the little church he pastored in Cincinnati. En route, we passed some of the bars on Vine Street. So often, we had to sidestep vomit on the sidewalks. These are some of my earliest memories. Men sat on the sidewalk, leaning against the bar steps, head in hand, and/or between their knees while church bells greeted the Sunday morning world.

In "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down", a drunkard observes a father and daughter playing, listens to a Sunday School song sung by children, and reflects on echoing church bells. They elicit fading memories – "disappearing dreams of yesterday" -- and something he "...lost somehow, somewhere along the way".

The critical question for those in this situation is, **"What will you do about it?"**. Your options are to keep running ["Wishing, Lord, that I was stoned"] or to respond to conviction and return to the Lord in childlike trust and faith.

...And a corollary question for all who profess faith in Jesus Christ:

If the man in this song stumbled into your church service, what would the church's response be? What should it be? Consider the following lyrics and message...

"If We Are The Body" by Casting Crowns

It's crowded in worship today
As she slips in trying to fade into the faces
The girl's teasing laughter is carrying farther than they know
Farther than they know

But if we are the body
Why aren't His arms reaching?
Why aren't His hands healing?
Why aren't His words teaching?
And if we are the body

Why aren't His feet going?
Why is His love not showing them there is a way?
There is a way

A traveler is far away from home
He sheds his coat and quietly sinks into the back row
The weight of their judgmental glances
Tells him that his chances are better out on the road

Jesus paid much too high a price
For us to pick and choose who should come
And we are the body of Christ
Jesus is the way

Jesus...

- Touched lepers Mark 1:40-45
- Ate with sinners Luke 15:1
- Spoke to an adulteress John 8:1-11
- Came to seek and to save the lost Luke 19:10

Final thoughts...

Loneliness has been described as a feeling of being excluded or estranged from other people and/or God -- often a sense of isolation, separation, or detachment from companionship, fellowship, intimacy, or community... or a feeling of separation or fear of being forsaken by God (<http://www.christinyou.net/pages/loneliness.html>). Jesus Christ is the answer, and His body, the church, must be willing to respond in love to those who seek Him.