

## **THE HEARTS WE GIVE EACH OTHER**

By just being alive and just being human we are always in danger of hurting and being hurt. Sometimes, we hurt each other physically, such as accidents, collisions (ka-wham!) contagious diseases (here, take my cold), not to mention fistfights and throwing pots and pans. (Long ago one of our ladies threw pots and pans, she's dead and gone now, gone where ladies who throw pots and pans go. She hit the dog and he bit her – served her right, taught her a lesson she never threw pots and pans again.)

In fact, just the idea of healing presupposes there are hurts to be healed. Presbyterians in general however, of course, are not given to brawls or shoot-outs in the family. How long has it been since you shot anybody at home? But again...How long has it been since you wanted to?

So today, we're not talking about fisti-cuffs or stabbings or bushwhacking (whatever that is). We are talking about the emotional wounds we give each other. Not the hurt that makes us scream, but the hurt that makes us sigh. When we've been offended, or slighted, or rebuffed, or betrayed, or abandoned, or misinterpreted, or misquoted, or misunderstood ... you name it. Most of us have felt it, firsthand, sometime, somehow – the deep down pain of emotional hurt at home that cries out for healing. Sometimes it makes us angry. (We blame the others, Tarzan to Jane when he flew off the handle: "I just can't help myself. My mother was an ape." "I can see that," said Jane, "I can see that."). Sometimes we pout, and sulk. Sometimes it affects our breathing. Sometimes we cry. But however we react, it hurts and apparently everything hurts somebody sometime. Unavoidable, it is.

There were times when even Jesus hurt people's feeling. When Jesus' mother wanted to show her son off a bit at that wedding in Cana of Galilee, and he corrected her sharply (He didn't say "Hail Mary, Mary quite contrary!" but what he did say was almost as cutting: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"). Yet he did as she said do, but don't you think her lip trembled? And then again, when good-hearted but awkward Peter blurted out that he didn't want his Lord, his best and nearest friend, to die, and Jesus "rebuked" him, calling him "Salam" (of all things). Don't you think that big friendly fisherman was stung to the quick? And later, it was Jesus himself who must have been hurt by his mother and his friend Mary coming to lead him home as though he had lost his mind and then Peter lying outright about him and denying he ever knew

him. Don't you think that hurt Jesus of Nazareth if he really were anywhere near as human as the creed says? Indeed, reading the gospel narrative, one has the feeling "Jesus wept" far more than once in his brief life.

None of us would be human at all if we didn't hurt and get hurt. Unavoidable, it is. Trying to avoid all hurt and pretending we don't need healing turns people into sub-humans--at least into submarines. They batten down the hatches, sink as far beneath the storming surface of life as they can go and try to avoid anything or anybody who might hurt them. They avoid making new friends. They avoid getting married. They will not have children. Or like the matinee idol, married four times with four children, he said: "never let any of them get close to me. I don't believe in getting hurt." He kept himself successfully closed up to those who wanted to love him. He was a big, rich, handsome clam-of-a-man who lost his humanity trying not to get hurt. Maybe better the pain of loving than the pain of loneliness, eh? You give up too much when you try to dodge all hurt. Maybe the first step in healing is not to hide the wound.

O.K. Let's suppose you're not like Dickens' Scrooge "as solitary and self-contained as an oyster." Let's suppose you're "involved" in "the pain of loving:" as husband and wife, or as old friends, or as young lovers just getting started on plans for a family together. Well let's say, you love each other. Let's say you trust each other. And let's say it's real. No pretend. Long ago you lowered your guard, opened your real self up to each other. So you are vulnerable, defenseless, just because you love. Then it happens – some barbed word, some act, thoughtless or deliberate, some harsh act – and the pain is like a knife in your middle. It knocks the breath out of you. You back away from each other. It's like being strangers again – enemies. It's the loneliest moment and not because you hated each other but because you held each other dear. And you can't ignore it. Bury it and you'd explode. And you can't laugh it off. Can't make a joke out of it. You're crazy to try that. So how in heaven do you handle hurt when it's hell to deal with?

Then try the old "Golden Rule" if you can find it. Ah, here it is: Matt. 7:12, a passage on humility, Jesus Christ speaking: "therefore all things whatsoever ye would that the others should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law of the prophets." Forgotten all about that, eh? Not a bad start on the "I'm so hurt" problem, however. Some real healing here.

No Date, Durham, NC

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Put it this way: it could be, we have (albeit) quite normally, been thinking (all-too-much) about the wounds we receive and not about the ones we give. Why do we think ours are always unintentional and theirs are always deliberate? Is the villain always the other one? And maybe I'm getting too sensitive, too touchy, too cranky and cross-patchy, far too, too hard for anybody to live with, much less love. Maybe I'm not aware of what a deadly weapon my own thoughtlessness is. Maybe I'm one of these people who talks a lot about corporate guilt in a guilty society, but when it comes right down to my own home, my own family and my friends, my job, I can give real injury and don't know it, or don't think about it, or (worse) don't care. Maybe I'm always feeling sorry for me and nursing my hurts and have become a grievance collector. And am I such a self-absorbed dummy it never even occurs to me to take any of the blame, to say, "I'm sorry, I've been a fool."? That's a big step for us to take, it's called humility and it's a step toward healing.

Most of the time, however, it takes two to say "I'm sorry." It takes the plural – it takes humility and it takes honesty. It takes saying, "Look, we've both played the fool. You and me.-- We've hurt each other. We're defenseless, because we love each other by God, (by God's help). Let's begin again."

You see? If love makes hurt possible, it makes healing possible too. As for where the Christian faith comes in all this, the faith makes whole-hearted forgiveness real. It's the one true remedy to heal the hurts we give each other.

"And be ye kind to one another (as Christians should), tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgive you." (Eph. 4:32)

But more of this next week.