

Silent Witness (The Hammer)—Lent 5—3/28/2001—Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Title: “Forgiving when it hurts”

Text: Luke 23: 33-34

Introduction: **Illus.: All End in the Cross**

Theme: When we have been hurt by another’s sin, learning to take it back to the cross will allow the hurt to end and the healing to begin and come to completion in our lives

**When someone else sins against me, IT HURTS!**

- **Often there is public pain and humiliation**
  1. Jesus suffered public humiliation in a public place (Skull) through the crucifixion
  2. It is often difficult to take a *public lashing* and not let it lead you to sin in retaliation
- **We endure physical pain and loss**
  1. Jesus literally endured pain that was unbearable—the manner of death was asphyxiation
  2. We have a difficult time forgiving when needless injuries/loss, physical/sexual abuse, harm to our children occur
- **The deeper spiritual pain is probably the least visible but the most damaging**
  1. Hanging among two murderers made Jesus guilty by association—*“He was made to be sin who knew no sin”*
  2. When condemnation/guilt/consequences occur—Satan ties us with sin—buries in guilt, & lies that God could love us
- **The emotional/psychological pain often is the “straw that breaks our back”**
  1. Even after Jesus prayed for God to forgive—they still sinned against him by devaluing him bargaining for clothes
  2. *“Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Matthew 18:21*
  3. **ILLUS.: SOMEONE HAS TO DIM THE LIGHTS**

**Moving beyond the hurt to the healing**

- **Unless we let go of the hurt, Jesus can never heal it with his forgiveness**
  1. **ILLUS.: FORGIVE AND MOVE ON (Robert E. Lee)**
- **Three parts of forgiveness**
  1. **Forego the right of striking back.**
    - a. Jesus did not curse, revolt, use his divine power to get even
    - b. **ILLUS.: TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK**
    - c. *Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging one makes you even with him; forgiving it sets you above him.*
  2. **Replace the feeling of resentment and anger with good will**
    - a. Jesus did not pray for God to get back at his persecutors but prayed for God to “let it go”
    - b. *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Ps 103: 12*
    - c. **ILLUS.: AREN’T YOU GLAD CHOSE EAST TO WEST AND NOT NORTH TO SOUTH?**
    - d. In Jesus God could forever remove our sin, the perpetrators sin, and the sins of the whole world—*completely*
  3. **Forgiving the person takes concrete steps to restore good relations.**
    - a. Jesus was willing to go through with the death so that a resurrection could occur
    - b. Sometimes in a wrong given a death must occur—in me—so that God can bring about a life-changing resurrection
    - c. **ILLUS.: THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL IN 2 TIM 4: 16-18**
      - <sup>16</sup>At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. <sup>17</sup>But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.-2 Tim. 4:14-18

### **All End in the Cross**

Suffering is the heritage of the bad, of the penitent, and of the Son of God. Each one ends in the cross. The bad thief is crucified, the penitent thief is crucified, and the Son of God is crucified. By these signs we know the widespread heritage of suffering. Citation: Oswald Chambers in Christian Discipline

### **Someone has to dim the lights**

My brother and I were driving one evening to Chattanooga, Tennessee, from Atlanta. He was driving the car. And for some reason the drivers were very discourteous that night. They didn't dim their lights; hardly any driver that passed by dimmed his lights. And I remember very vividly, my brother A.D. looked over and in a tone of anger said: "I know what I'm going to do. The next car that comes along here and refuses to dim the lights, I'm going to fail to dim mine and pour them on in all of their power."

And I looked at him right quick and said: "Oh no, don't do that. There'd be too much light on this highway, and it will end up in mutual destruction for all. Somebody got to have some sense on this highway."

Somebody must have sense enough to dim the lights, and that is the trouble, isn't it? That as all of the civilizations of the world move up the highway of history, so many civilizations, having looked at other civilizations that refused to dim the lights, and they decided to refuse to dim theirs. And Toynbee tells that out of the twenty-two civilizations that have risen up, all but about seven have found themselves in the junkheap of destruction. It is because civilizations fail to have sense enough to dim the lights. And if somebody doesn't have sense enough to turn on the dim and beautiful and powerful lights of love in this world, the whole of our civilization will be plunged into the abyss of destruction. And we will all end up destroyed because nobody had any sense on the highway of history.

Somewhere somebody must have some sense. Men must see that force begets force, hate begets hate, toughness begets toughness. And it is all a descending spiral, ultimately ending in destruction for all and everybody. Somebody must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and the chain of evil in the universe. And you do that by love.

### **Forgive and Move On**

After the Civil War, Robert E. Lee visited a Kentucky lady who took him to the remains of a grand old tree in front of her house. There she bitterly cried that its limbs and trunk had been destroyed by Federal Artillery fire. She looked to Lee for a word condemning the North or at least sympathizing with her loss. After a brief silence, Lee said, "Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it." It is better to forgive the injustices of the past than to allow them to remain, let bitterness take root and poison the rest of our life.

### **Turning the Other Cheek**

My friend's four boys were young and bursting with energy, especially in church. But the sermon her minister preached on "turning the other cheek" got their undivided attention. The minister stressed that no matter what others do to us, we should never try to "get even." That afternoon the youngest boy came into the house crying. Between sobs he told his mother he had kicked one of his brothers, who had kicked him in return. "I'm sorry you're hurt," his mother said. "But you shouldn't go around kicking people." To which the tearful child replied, "But the preacher said he isn't supposed to kick me back."

### **As Far as East Is From West**

The psalmist tells us that when we ask God to forgive our sins, he removes them as far as the east is from the west. Do you know how far that is? Truth is, it can't even be measured. I brought a globe to show you that the east and west are actually further apart than the north and south. If I start here in North America and go north, eventually I get to the top of the globe at the North Pole. If I continue the same direction, I start going south. Eventually the north meets the south. But if I start in Illinois here and keep going east, when will I start going west? Never. The psalmist says God will remove our sin from us--not as far as the north is from the south, but as far as the east is from the west.

### **Luke 23:33-34**

When they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified him. The criminals were also crucified, one on his right and the other on his left. <sup>34</sup>Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." Meanwhile, the soldiers divided his clothes among themselves by throwing dice.