

Sermon Series: "The Darkness and the Dawn"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield—3/23/2003

Title: "Playing Hurt"

Text: John 19: 25-27

Intro: *Ills.:Playing Hurt*

Theme: When we are called upon to care for the hurting when we ourselves are wounded, physically or emotionally, we can find the strength and the resolve to carry it out through Jesus' life and death for us.

Challenges to caring for others when we ourselves are hurting

- Our own pain
 1. Our hurts/pains/disappointments/discouragements are a direct result of sin in the world
 1. Mary and John experienced the hurt of loss of a son/a friend because of sin's impact on world Jesus came to save
 2. Experiencing the hurts, the pains, the losses of life, we are reminded of why Jesus came and why we need him
 2. Remembering that Jesus came to redeem even your hurts
 1. *"Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion. Psalm 103: 2-4*
- Our loneliness in our hurt
 3. Often our isolation is self-imposed and exacerbates our own pain
 1. At the foot of the cross Mary and John felt alone but were surrounded by a host of believers and each other
 2. In divorce, cancer, job loss, loss of parent, failing grades, isolation is your enemy and fellowship your friend
 4. Look around yourself to see the fellowship of the redeemed
 1. *"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." Romans 12:12-15*
 2. Maybe the one requiring your attention and care is the very one through whom God is bringing therapy to you.
 3. **Ills.: The Suffering Community**

Fixing our eyes on Jesus to perfect our care-giving

- *"Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" Hebrews 12: 2*
- The One who initiated gracious love to those who need it and don't deserve it
 1. Resist the urge to evaluate the hurting's "right" to your love
 2. *"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5: 7-8*
 3. First to initiate love rather than waiting for the hurting to ask for it (*often a loss of face effort*)
 4. **Ills.: God's Son punished for our sins**
 5. *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." 1 John 3:16*
- The One who can perfect our weak and incomplete love
 6. Jesus is best able to use us when we are we incomplete, weak, and out of strength to accomplish it
 1. *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." 2 Cor 12: 9*
 2. Both Mary and John had nothing more to give
 3. Jesus had more than enough reserves to fill them up through his love to accomplish what he was asking them to do
 7. When heroic care and one-way love are required, Jesus is more than able to give you what you need to be "generous"

1. Drawing on the full well of Christ's love rather than trying to ration the limited resource we have
2. *"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."* 2 Cor. 9:8
8. Let Christ purify and perfect you in your care-giving through your time of weakness
 1. *"Love each other with a warm love that comes from the heart. After all, you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth. As a result you have a sincere love for each other."* 1 Peter 1:22

Playing Hurt

Back in August of 2000, during the midst of a heated major league baseball pennant race, the Atlanta Braves were playing the Colorado Rockies. It was the 9th inning, and the score was tied at 6-6. The game continued. As the innings progressed, the Rockies used all of their relief pitchers. (Major league teams have 25 person rosters, 10 of which are usually pitchers. Of those, four or five are starters, and the rest are relievers.) Without any relief pitchers left on the bench, the starting pitcher from the night before was sent out to pitch an inning. He had pitched numerous innings the night before but went out again and held the Braves. In the 12th inning, the Rockies had a terrible choice. Should they send out one of their two remaining starting pitchers, who would have to play over the next two days, or a utility player? They chose to send an injured catcher, Brent Mayne, to the mound. The manager asked him: "Can you pitch?" "Sure" said Brent, even though he had never pitched at any level in his life. A few pitches went over the catcher's head. One flew behind a batter's back, but Mayne managed to get the Braves to ground into two grounders and a fly ball out to get the Rockies out of the inning. In the bottom of that inning, Mayne's position came up to hit. With an injured batting hand, he couldn't. So the Rockies sent out a new player who had never had a hit in the major leagues. Of course he drove a run in to win the game. Why tell this story? Because sometimes [Christian workers] have to fill uncomfortable positions. Sometimes you have to do it even when you are hurt. You have to go out there and take one for the team. **Citation:** Dave Travis, *Church Champions Update (8-25-00)*

The Suffering Community

I've always wondered what makes community biblical—as opposed to community that is merely social. Often churches provide social community, called fellowship, which meets a genuine need for friendships and a place where, like the "Cheers" theme, "everyone knows your name." That's all well and good. I certainly want my children, for example, to build healthy friendships with other kids from our church. But recently I experienced, for the first time, a more profound sense of biblical community. For the past 7 years, my wife and I have participated in a small group, which at present comprises five couples. This past year, our group celebrated the birth of a child to one of the couples. We also cheered raucously this year when two other women in the group announced their pregnancies, and then we prayed fervently for safe deliveries and healthy babies. Both women were due within weeks of each other. In October, the woman who was due first became concerned when her due date came and went. She said the baby seemed to be moving less. That was Saturday. But the ultrasound detected a strong heartbeat on Monday. On Tuesday, there was no heartbeat. On Wednesday morning, she gave birth to Ian Patrick Lincoln, whom we would never get to know. The umbilical cord was wrapped twice around his neck. My wife and I—and several others from our small group—were at the hospital Wednesday morning when Ian was born. First his grandpa came out to the waiting room, then his dad, then the doctor. We huddled together, sobbing, staring down at our shoes. We attempted to pray. Then we all went to the delivery room to see Ian's mom and his body. The week dragged by. After the funeral, we collapsed from exhaustion. It was the saddest week in my life since my grandfather died 12 years ago. In grieving with the parents and the other members of my small group, I learned an old truth: Much of our spiritual development happens only through suffering. But in this life, suffering is not evenly meted out. Especially in the suburbs, which tend to secret away suffering and death, one can go for long stretches without smelling the stench of death. But isolation from suffering stunts spiritual formation. I had gone 12 years without deep mourning. Community forced me into relationship with a small circle of people who are becoming closer than family. I was forced to suffer loss—vicariously but real nonetheless. Community is not just a place for the suffering to find comfort but for the comfortable to find suffering. Together we join Christ in his suffering, and as a result,

as 2 Corinthians 1:4 says, "we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." **Citation: Dave Goetz, executive editor of *PreachingToday.com*, From *ChurchLeadersOnline.com* (11-17-99)**

God's Son punished for our sins

A distressed father sat at the bedside of his comatose son, hurt playing basketball. At a crucial point in the game, the 16-year-old lunged for an errant pass going out of bounds. As he toppled over a spectator's chair, one of its legs caught him in the stomach and damaged vital organs. Because he felt little pain, the teen continued to play the game's final minutes while he hemorrhaged internally. By the time the pain grew enough to warrant a trip to the hospital, it was almost too late. The doctors worked frantically to save him, but the outcome was uncertain. Though the son eventually recovered, those awful hours of waiting for the slightest signs of recovery forced family members to ask questions they'd never before faced. The father was alone on his bedside shift one evening when the pastor visited. Trembling with emotion, the father asked, "Will God kill my son to punish my sin?" "No," said the young minister, searching for words that would comfort and grant renewed trust in the God this father now so desperately needed. "The Lord's not punishing *your* son for your sin. He couldn't, because God punished *his* son for your sin." **Citation: Bryan Chapell, *The Wonder of It All* (Crossway, 1999); quoted in *Men of Integrity* (March/April 2001)**

John 19:25-27

Therefore the soldiers did these things. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household." [NASB]