

The Rev. Deborah Hughes-Habel
Sermon for February 7, 2021
Healing Our Woundedness

“We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in light of what they suffer”. *Letters and Papers from Prison*

What I just read to you is a quote from the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran theologian, who was imprisoned and died in a Nazi concentration camp in 1945.

He tells us that we must learn to regard people more in light of what they suffer. When he wrote this, our country was in the middle of a world war. Now, we seem to be in another war. A war of division and hatred equally as horrific as our parents and grandparents experienced but in a different way.

We find ourselves grappling with the difficulty of dis-regarding our neighbor while ignoring the suffering inflicted by deep seeded unresolved wounds that strip us of what we are called to be for each other. Our parents and grandparents would not of recognized this war because, since that time, we have become a more secularized and individualized culture.

If you have lived any life at all, you know that life is all about suffering; physical suffering and emotional suffering. But, what you may not realize, is that what really undergirds that suffering is a lack of spiritual fulfillment that holds the whole holistic piece of the puzzle together.

We have lost our way and have become sidetracked into our own wounded dead-end without a map to find our way out. Particularly, in these past years of partisan politics and a world-wide pandemic, our faith flashlight has dimmed and our batteries are depleted. Our compassion meter seems broken.

It is hard you say!

It is hard to regard someone while attending to their needs in the midst of their suffering.

I've got my own needs to consider you say.

...Yes, it is excruciatingly hard and what we are most inclined to do is run away, turn away our gaze and not even acknowledge, in some extremes, their very personhood, their very humanity. That is what the world did to the Jewish nation during WWII.

To not acknowledge someone's pain, you might think at some level, would be self-protective but I would suggest that it is more an affirmation of the suffering you see in yourself that keeps you from acknowledging another person's pain.

To acknowledge their pain would mean that you would have to acknowledge your own as well and what that really means. That may be too difficult because the fog of pain you are looking through is too thick. In other words, your pain blinds you to the extent that you cannot see your neighbor's pain too.

The societal wounds of racial injustice, economic and healthcare disparity, and loneliness of Covid weep and ooze constantly. And no amount of wound pressure, medication and bandaging by our government seems to aide in its healing. Our national wounds are too great to see the deeply spiritual wounds we fail to address and undergird our societal wounds too.

So, I ask you. Are we too far gone from a spiritual recovery? Are we too distant from helping our neighbor's in their suffering?

This brings me back to our Gospel reading from Mark this morning. What do we see and hear in today's reading? It is just a passage that talks about Jesus' ministry of healing or is it drawing us into a deeper understanding of what spiritual healing is?

But first I would like to remind you of what 1st century listeners would of understood when they heard this passage.

The writer of Mark has already identified who Jesus is in the opening passages of his gospel. The first time was at Jesus' baptism and then in the synagogue with the exorcism of the unclean spirit, who upon his release from his human captive, said, "I know who your are, the Holy One of God." Mark1:24.

Jesus had the authority of God! That was clearly understood.

As scripture has told us, suffering and death came into the world with the Fall. The Divine order was broken and now, humanity, for time and eternity, will suffer and then die.

Mark's listeners would of known that illness was outside of God's plan for the divine order and only their faith in God would restore that Divine Order to them.

God, as Creator of life, was the healer and chief of their health and wellbeing. Their health depended on their relationship with God and if that relationship was broken, illness and death reflected their sin of separation. Therefore, illness in the 1st century was a spiritual problem and God's intervention was needed for healing.

So, Jesus's authority to heal came from the only source they knew could heal, their Creator God! And along with healing came forgiveness and restoration of their relationship to their Creator God.

Powerful stuff!

Jesus' healing power was unsurpassed from anything they had ever witnessed.

Jesus' actions in this passage, for his followers, changed everything because he used his power to transform the wounds of his sufferer's with the simple actions of walking up to and embracing their condition. He took the risk and came to them, heard them and touched them while lifting them out of their lost and darkened state to become empowered with new and healed lives.

What is most important to know is that Jesus enters into **our** suffering too and by God's authority sends us on our healing journey so that we may serve God just as the healed woman, Simon's mother-in-law, did.

Because her transformation was so complete, she was able get up from her sick bed and serve Jesus and his disciples! She came through her pain, with God's help, and now she could use her experience to help heal others.

As Jesus, she will not need to judge, because she was not judged. She will not need to regard the sufferers she meets in the light of what they did or did not do, because she was not regarded in that light by Jesus. She will be able to embrace their personhood with honor and love because Jesus did so with compassion for her.

It seems so simple when we understand what Jesus is doing in this passage doesn't it?

That is because it really is.

We, Christian men and women like you and me, make it so difficult.

Thank goodness, our faith and scripture sheds light on God's plan of redemption and healing.

Our faith, with daily prayer, can recharge our batteries so we can find our way out of our woundedness and onto a path of hope and healing.

We have seen that in so many ways here at All Saints.

WE, as wounded healers, have walk up to and into peoples lives to be present and listen to their stories of pain and suffering.

We have served the homeless of our community, those suffering from food scarcity and those suffering from the deep loneliness exasperated by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns in their homes away from families and friends.

We have served our faith community with phone calls, emails, home visits, and countless Zoom videos to stay connected and present to each other.

So, I ask the question again. Are we too far gone for a spiritual recovery?

No, I think not because we know that God is on our side. He is the balm that heals!

God uses everything to heal the world. Everything! There are no dead ends. Jesus has given us our map to follow.

That, you can rely on! Always!

We are all apart of God's spiritual plan to strengthen us to be compassionate and loving witnesses of God's love in the world.

Jesus shows us the way.

We are a healed people!

So, go forth and be the healers of the world.

The world is calling you.

The world is looking for you.

The world needs you.

You have the authority to heal.

Jesus gave it to you!