

"Good Shepherd Sunday"

May 3, 2020

Acts 2:42-47, 1 Peter 2:19-25, John 10:1-10

"God's Antidote for your Hurt"

If I were to ask the wives and mother's today, have you ever suffered for doing what was right? How many of you would raise your hands? Just about every one of you, right?

For example? You criticize something that your husband is doing. Your intent is to help that man be all that he can be and what happens? The husband takes it as a personal attack and lashes into you mercilessly.

I still remember one day when I put on very casual clothes to come over to church to do some work. I am at the door ready to go out and my wife tells me, "You are not going to church wearing that, are you?"

Immediately, I get defensive, and I gave my wife a lecture about not telling me what to do or what to wear. Finally, I come back to reality, and realized my wife was right, and quietly went and put on something else that was more appropriate. The end result was that my wife suffered for doing what was right.

Or how about you mothers with your kids when they were young. You love them dearly. You know what's best for them. You make a suggestion to your teenager about what they should be doing or thinking about and instead of respecting your opinion, and listening to it, your teenager attacks you, shouts and screams at you.

Again, your intent was just to help. You did what you thought was right and you paid the consequences. Suffering for doing what is right. It happens quite regularly.

It might be someone teasing you because of your Christian convictions. It might be when you confront someone on a sinful behavior. It might be living in a home with a problem drinker or someone using drugs and then having to deal with their constant blame game. Suffering because you are trying to do what is right.

Or what about trying to having a cheerful spirit in the work place when your boss is mean and ugly. That can be a moment of suffering and sometimes there can be a lot of hurt involved.

A lot of us are hurting inside right now, for actually doing what is right. These days can be very trying so, let's put some ointment on our wounds today and look at the theme: God's Antidote for Your Hurt.

Our lesson begins with the words, "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."

The point is... If you are getting "whacked" note:(not in the Soprano's kind of way) for doing something wrong, you deserve it but if you are getting whacked for doing what is right, that is a commendable thing with God.

So let's take a more in-depth look at what not to do, and what to do when you suffer for doing what is right.

1. **DON'T IGNORE THE HURT.** Don't be like Clint Eastwood and use his approach to pain. Suffer in silence. Bite the bullet. Pretend it doesn't exist and hope it all will go away.

We often try to cope with our hurt by pretending it doesn't exist and there are several ways we can easily do this:

a) Flat out denial -- I don't have a problem; I'm not hurting. We deny how we feel. People hurt us and we say, "That didn't hurt".

b) Minimize it -- "It was no big deal." "It didn't hurt me that bad." "Don't worry about it. It's okay.

c) Procrastinate -- We postpone doing anything about it. Sweep it under the carpet. "One of these days...." but we keep putting it off, we keep postponing it because we always try to avoid the unpleasant.

But ignoring our hurt never heals it. The hurt that you're trying to ignore right now won't get any better. People say, "Time heals all wounds" --but sometimes time makes it worse when we keep putting it off.

Ps. 39 says "I kept very quiet... but I became even more upset. I became very angry inside, and as I thought about it, my anger burned." Procrastination turns minor problems into major ones. It gets worse. It festers. The wounds get infected and spread when we don't deal with them immediately.

2. DON'T RUN FROM THE HURT. David tried it and it didn't work. Ps. 55 says, "I wish I had wings like a dove. Then I'd fly away and rest. I would hurry to my place of escape..."

This is human nature. When we face difficulty many times we run from it. It's not by accident that all the doors in public buildings open outward. When people panic, they run.

We try to get away from our pain and there are many different ways to escape: BUT the problem is that the problems never go away. You can mask the situation for a while but they never gets resolved, nothing ever changes.

Some people just keep it all inside. They keep it to themselves. They don't tell anybody. They wear a mask and some people are really good at camouflaging their pain.

A person can wear nice clothes and have a pleasant smile but the fact is you've been hurt by somebody very deeply. Sometimes we play a game called "Is something wrong?" and we are quick to answer, "No, nothing's wrong."

The face is that we hate to admit when we're hurt. We'll admit it when we're angry, that seems to be easier, but not when we're hurt. We don't like to admit that somebody hurt our feelings so we disguise it.

Sometimes people can camouflage their pain with materialism. They buy nice cars and homes and surround themselves with things, and when they hurt, they go shopping. Retail therapy!

But possessions will never compensate for pain. When you hurt, all the possessions in the world won't soothe that hurt. Someone once said "When I kept things to myself, I felt weak deep inside me. I moaned all day long." Hiding a hurt only intensifies it. It only makes it worse.

So if none of these methods work, how do we handle our hurts? Two ways!

1. LET JESUS SETTLE THE SCORE. Don't try to get even. Don't seek revenge. Don't retaliate against those who hurt you. Trust God to even the odds. Give it to God and let God settle the score and He will.

David says "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Jesus says, think of a shepherd, and think of sheep. I am the shepherd. You are the sheep. Sheep have many natural enemies -- wolves, coyotes, bears, snakes, ticks...

Sheep are very defenseless animals. They cannot defend themselves from anything. They don't have teeth that are sharp that they can bite with. They don't have claws. They can't kick. They can't run fast. They are absolutely the most defenseless animal there is. They don't know how to do anything. They can't be safe unless somebody protects them.

The job of a good shepherd is to go find a good table land, a mesa, a field of green grass, and drive out all the enemies. Then he brings the sheep and gives them a safe place to eat. He scouts out the pasture and drives out the enemies.

God says, "Let me handle those who've hurt you." Romans 12 "Never pay back evil for evil. ... never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for He has said that He will repay those who deserve it." God knows the people who've hurt you. He sees it and He cares. He can settle the score.

The Bible says one day He will settle the score. There is a heaven, there is a hell, there is a judgment day. He has far more resources to settle the score than you do.

He says you cannot recover from your hurt as long as you're seeking revenge. You've got to decide, are you going to get revenge or are you going to get well? You can't do both.

Today, revenge is big business. We see how that sickness affected so many families in Nova Scotia last week. We see how revenge can raise someone's anger to a point of senseless violence.

Revenge doesn't work. It always backfires. It keeps the hurt alive. When you retaliate against the hurt all you do is escalate the pain. It doesn't relieve the pain, it makes it worse.

There's only one way you'll ever get the relief and that's forgiveness. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you say "It's OK that you hurt me." Forgiveness is not saying, "What you did is not a bad deal." Forgiveness is not saying it didn't hurt. Forgiveness is not denying that evil is done in this world.

Forgiveness means giving my hurt to God and letting Him settle the score. Just trust God to handle the situation and don't try to get even. Let Him prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies. Don't try to get even.

So why should I forgive?

- a) Because you've been forgiven by God. God's forgiven you and He wants you to forgive others.
- b) Because resentment makes you miserable.
- c) Because you're going to need more forgiveness in the future yourself. Only as I am forgiving to others is God able to forgive me. What you dole out is what you get back. The longer you try to get revenge, the longer you'll hurt.

The second way we can handle our hurts is to,

2. LET JESUS SOOTH YOUR WOUNDS. Shepherds used to put oil on the heads of sheep for two reasons: to sooth and to heal. The worst enemy of sheep is flies. They hate flies. They can't shake off the flies either by their hooves or their tail.

Summertime means fly time for sheep. The flies get up in their nose and lay eggs. And the larva drives them crazy. Sometimes in the summertime you'll see a sheep banging its head against a rock because he's going crazy from the flies. He can't do anything about it.

Isn't it amazing that it's the little things in life that really irritate you? What shepherds do is take olive oil and mix it with sulfur and anoint the head of the sheep and it's like an insect repellent. This represents the shepherd saying, "I'll take care of the irritations. The things that irritate you, I'll take care of them."

The other way oil is used is as a salve, an ointment. When a sheep has an open wound, the shepherd would use it as an ointment. It would protect them and it was soothing.

When David says, "You anoint my head with oil" he is saying God is going to soothe my wounds. This is the same thing Jesus Christ wants to do with the hurts in your life.

Ps. 147 says "God heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds." He says, "Not only will I settle the score, but if you'll come to Me and let Me have your hurts, I'll settle the score and then do a little repair work -- a little work on restoring your spirit. I can soothe those hurts. I can bandage them up."

How does Jesus do that? By having us remember the unjust treatment He endured. They spat in his face, hit him, they mocked him saying, "If you are the Son of God, come down from that cross. Yet He did not retaliate. He made no threats.

He entrusted himself to his Heavenly Father, knowing that He would deal justly with all the injustice in our world. And Jesus died on that cross, not for any wrongs He did, but for all the insulting, and hurtful things I have done to God with my life. We were like sheep who had gone astray. Through His wounds, you and I have been healed.

And because Jesus did that our reaction is this: We want to stop doing what is wrong in our lives, and do what is right, no matter what the painful outcomes might be. Keep striving to do what is right no matter how much you suffer because Jesus will soothe your hurts, especially when you consider how much He was hurt for your sake.

Not only that but Jesus uses our fellowship with each other to heal us. When we get together with other Christians, we find support. When we're able to share our hurts, we get emotional support.

The first thing we need to do when we've been hurt by somebody is we need to share it with a Christian friend. During these days being apart from other Christians has been so hard because we long for that time together.

And finally, Jesus uses worship to help us heal. Have you ever come into a church service when you were down and the music starts and all of sudden tears begin. This is emotional healing.

Jesus uses praise and His Word to build us up and bind up our wounds and one day soon the musical instruments will play and we will all hear voices singing and we will all gather together around the altar together again and life will be grand.

But today, especially during these very difficult days of being apart, everybody has a hurt. It may be different for each one of us but everybody has hurts so cheer up because the Lord will heal the brokenhearted and bandage up your wounds. "Lean of Him" and sing the song...

This is God's antidote for your hurt. May God bless you keep you until we meet again. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.