



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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HEALING FOR DAMAGED EMOTIONS SERIES

THE LEGACY OF ALL WHO KNOW HIM

~ Isaiah 61:1-3 & Luke 4:21 ~

by Steve Bringardner

Isaiah 61:1-3

¹ *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,*

² *to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,*

³ *and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.*

Isaiah was picturing the deliverance of Israel from exile in Babylon as a Year of Jubilee when all debts are cancelled, all slaves freed, and all property is returned to original owners (cf. Leviticus 25).

But the release from Babylonian exile had not brought the fulfillment the people had expected.

They were still in bondage—like many “believers” in the church today. They were not enjoying the blessings of being God’s chosen people. So, Isaiah was looking ahead to a future age, when the Messiah would come to accomplish all these things.

Fast forward to Luke 4. Jesus is standing in the synagogue at the outset of his public ministry. He reads to the people gathered these very words from Isaiah (mainly the 1st verse). Then he rolls up the scroll and boldly announces: “*Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*” (v. 21).

Jesus is saying: “*I am the One who has come to bind up and heal. . .to release and set free.*”

“*He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.*”

Yet many of us have not experienced this deliverance. You may have made a profession of faith recently or years ago, yet there are a lot of unresolved emotional issues and you are in bondage. The “joy of salvation” is not your portion.

There are three realities that I want you to be aware of this morning.

REALITY #1: WE ARE ALL WOUNDED

No matter whether you are young in the Lord or been a believer for awhile—all of us have been wounded. We've all, somewhere along the way, taken an arrow or 2 or 3 in the center of our hearts. There are places in our lives where we experience tremendous pain and angst. It's like having a rock in your shoe: these things may not completely undo your life, but they do slow you down and cause a fair amount of irritation.

Becoming a Christian doesn't necessarily fix these things! Now. . .

(A) Some of our wounds come as a result of things we have done. How many have ever done something stupid you have regretted later? Perhaps something that hurt you plus someone else?

Perhaps you've lashed out at a friend or family member. . .driven while "under the influence". . . spent the night with a stranger. . .or gotten abusive.

We have all had those moments we would like to take back, but just can't. Moments when we have wounded ourselves in the process of wounding others.

(B) Some of our woundedness comes from the things other people have done to us. We have all felt the sting of being hurt / wounded by another.

ILLUSTRATION> A man once told me of growing up during the depression. Times were hard for his family. His father, an alcoholic rarely employed, hired him out to a nearby farmer. One day while he was in the field he saw his father's car pull up. He hadn't seen him for weeks, so he raced to greet his dad. Before he could get there his father grabbed the check for his son's wages, and, spying the boy running toward him, jumped into the car and sped away. The boy was only 5 years old.

Not receiving affection or approval from a father (or mother)—what we call "*the blessing*"—is a huge wound to our ego, to our sense of self-worth, to our sense of well-being.

Sadly, these wounds are put there by those closest to us—a parent, a friend, a spouse, a surrogate parent (e.g.: foster, step, mother's boyfriend, etc.). The assault can be:

- Verbal (in the form of criticism / sarcasm / put downs)
- Silent (lack of affirmation / interest / involvement)
- Physical or Sexual (it can get unspeakably ugly & evil)

At this point, I'd like to make two disclaimers. . .

FIRST, In this series, we are not going to spend time bashing parents, knocking heredity, bad mouthing teachers, old sweethearts or spouses for our defeats, failures, excesses (impulsiveness), and inability to experience God or His love, peace and joy.

We are saying that there may be certain areas of our lives that need a special healing by the Holy Spirit. Areas not subject to ordinary prayer, discipline, or willpower. Areas that need a special touch from God, along with an unlearning of past programming and a relearning (or reprogramming) by the renewing of our minds in Christ Jesus.

SECOND, We are not going to focus unduly on the past. We are a church that seeks not to remind or criticize people about their *PAST*. . .but to support and help people get through their *PRESENT* . . .and even more, to focus and start telling people about their *FUTURE*.

REALITY #2: WE ALL LONG TO BE WHOLE

There is a longing deep inside all of us for new life, redemption, healing. Emotional healing is much more than temporary relief from some symptoms. Emotional healing is a process whereby God takes a wounded person or thing “and over time restores it to its original form, or even better than its original form.” “Redemption isn’t just about getting back to square one, but moving you to something more whole than you could ever have imagined.”

That takes time! It’s a gradual conversion—not to be confused with “conversion to Christ”, which can take place in a moment in time. This transformation begins at the edges of life and works toward the center. It’s a gradual move *from illusion to reality*. It’s taking the blinders off, overcoming the denial, getting a clear picture of who we are in Christ’s eyes.

Remember the old POLAROID cameras? How the picture gradually would take shape as you held it in your hand? This is letting God work gently and consistently to diminish the illusions we have had about life, relationships, and ourselves. . .and bringing us to a deeper understanding, a deeper reality, a deeper experience of who He is and who He made us to be.

REALITY #3: CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

I wouldn’t be a pastor OR a Christian if it wasn’t!

But we’ve got to be open to it. We’ve got to be willing to take some steps. . .some risks. I often say to people, “*If nothing changes, then nothing changes*”—meaning we’ve got to at least get ourselves into a position in which we are open to change.

I believe if you are, you will find you are not frozen in time. You are not stuck in one gear. You do not have to carry the “emotional baggage” around like a ball and chain for the rest of your life.

Change is possible. I have experienced it in my own life. I am a living witness to God’s healing power.

My father and mother’s marriage was troubled. It ended in divorce, in part due to alcohol abuse. He was a gifted entrepreneur. . .but also an angry man. When I was 15 he tore through the house (literally). There was debris (e.g.: shattered glass, torn clothes, broken chairs) strewn throughout the house. From that point on, I was embarrassed to bring friends over to my house.

As I recuperated from that traumatic experience—as I went on into college and young adulthood—I discovered myself to be:

- Afraid of people and authority figures (e.g.: going before a District Superintendent was like going before the firing squad)
- I became a people pleaser
- I was frightened by angry people and couldn’t take any personal criticism
- I could really get down on myself
- I became perfectionistic (it’s tough to live around one. . .ask Marcie)
- And super-organized!

I carried that woundedness for years. Then I began to work in the field of chemical dependency, and even though I was never an abuser of substances I learned I was an ACOA (Adult Child of an Alcoholic).

It's taken many experiences and interventions by God and the love of a lot of people—including my wife—to bring me to where I am today.

Maybe that's more information (about me) than you ever wanted to know. But I offer it because I am a living witness to the ongoing transforming, healing work of Jesus Christ. I am here to tell you there is healing for damaged emotions. Jesus does bind up the broken-hearted!

There are no formulas with God. He never does it the same way twice:

- For one, he spits on the ground. . .makes mud. . .and puts that on his eyes
- To another, he simply speaks
- Another, he touches
- With another, he kicks out a demon.

The way God chooses to heal your wound will be a deeply personal process.

Here is what He uses to bind up broken hearts.

(A) PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where the real problem is and how to pray.

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know how to pray, but the Holy Spirit prays in and through us, and makes intercession for us. . .He searches our heart and knows” [Romans 8:26-27].

(B) REMEMBERING

Remembering is facing the pain of our own secrets. . .facing our shame (even if we didn't cause it) and how it is getting in the way (affecting others around us).

We are afraid! And for good reason. It's like going to the dentist and asking him to drill without Novocain.

But we are going to have to come out of denial, and that will likely take us down “memory lane”.

That can be painful, but if you're willing, you can isolate old lies you've believed (e.g.: “*I'm no good*”, “*I'm not pretty*”, “*I'm easy*”, etc.).

(C) CONFESSION

It's easy for us to play *the blame game*. We say: “I was sinned against. I was the victim.” But how many times have we used that to justify hate and resentment? Or allow ourselves to escape into an unreal world? Or use it an excuse to keep repeating the same mistakes?

ILLUSTRATION> Life is like a complicated tapestry, woven with a loom & shuttle. Heredity, environment, and childhood experiences (with parents, teachers and friends)—all of these things are on one side of the loom. And the shuttle comes to you. But you then pass the shuttle back through the loom (via your actions, your responses). That is what weaves the design in the tapestry of your life.

All of us are responsible for our actions and reactions. Part of the healing process for damaged emotions includes accepting responsibility.

The dysfunctional patterns of your life and your family's life need not pass down from generation to generation ("unto the 3rd and 4th generation"). We can break the cycle!

(D) FORGIVENESS

Dealing with GUILT & SHAME is sure to be part of the healing process. Guilt and shame are the constant companions of the wounded. We perpetually feel like we made a mistake (that's guilt) and like we are a mistake (that's shame).

Jesus came to set the prisoners free:

- Let him release you from the confused ball of guilt & shame.
- Then you release (forgive) yourself.
- And, as the Lord's Prayer says, "*forgive those who trespass against us.*"

Forgiveness is a choice, an act of will more than it is a feeling. If you wait till you feel like it, you'll never do it.

RECAP: Prayer, Remembering, Confession, Forgiveness. These are the pathways to healing.

CONCLUSION

Here is what I'd like for you to do this morning: I would like for you to invite Jesus into your memories. . .invite Jesus to step into your pain. I realize what I'm talking about may have made you uncomfortable; it may have dredged up some painful memories or issues. Don't tackle these alone. We are all part of the Body of Christ, and as such have been given an immense privilege of assisting each other in the process of healing.

Maybe God is calling you to get these things out on the table and with the help of a spiritual counselor or guide, a Stephen Minister, a therapist or support group, or a friend to "*look under the hood*". Jesus said, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock*". The phony front, the chosen blindness, the blissful arrogance will no longer get you through. He wants to cleanse you, heal you, restore you, make you whole.

ILLUSTRATION> I read about a woman who had an extremely painful memory of an uncle exploiting her at about the age of 11-12. It happened while the family was on vacation—on a boat dock while they were waiting for her parents to arrive. The scene played itself daily in her mind, with the accompanying belief that "I am a shameful person." One day, after an extended time of prayer, a figure walked out onto the dock. She immediately recognized it as Jesus.

This is how she described it: "*He looked so loving and strong. He said to me, Janie, nothing is going to happen to you. I will protect you, and he did! He did protect me! Jesus just sat there and talked with me and laughed with me, and my uncle was entirely out of the picture. All I saw was Jesus. He told me that I was good and clean and that I could forget this incident now.*"

And she did!

That's what he wants to do for you and for me.

ILLUSTRATION> It is like going to the power box in your house and dismantling one of the circuits. When the electricity comes back on, the wire is still there but there is no power running through it. It can no longer hurt, shock, or immobilize you.

That's your LEGACY AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST [title of sermon]: To have your woundedness healed. To have those harmful memories de-activated. When Jesus binds up your broken heartedness, he nullifies the PAST. . .helps you deal with the PRESENT. . .and gives you an expectancy for the FUTURE.

CLOSING

You have a choice. No matter how damaged you have been, you can choose to open yourself up to God's love & healing power through the Holy Spirit. Just now, ask him to release you from all bondage and captivity as he promised. Ask him to heal all the broken place within you.

Pray with me: "Gather all my broken fragments to a whole. Let mine be an open, all-receiving heart. Make it whole, with light in every part."

Benediction: Your transformation and healing will be a lifelong process. You will forever need Him. May He take you *from glory to glory*. . .and use you—even in your woundedness—as an agent of healing & restoration in someone else's life.