

Feb 13, 2022

Let us pray.

O God of Love, O God of Truth;

Let us say strong things gently and gentle things strongly.

Let us speak the truth in love to all
and love the truth that lives in each.

Let us hear the truth as we each need it and live that truth.

O God, we heed it through Jesus; Your Word & our Lord.

Amen.

Victory Over Victim-hood

Luke 6:22 ff

“Blessed are you when people hate you and exclude you and revile you and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice for surely your reward is great in (God’s kingdom).”

1 Cor. 13:4 ff

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not keep a record of wrongs, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...”

Do you live “in the hood”?

That’s vernacular for “do you live in the neighborhood”?

Which actually has nothing to do with head-gear,
or wearing “hoodies”,
nor anything about a place or locale.

The suffix “hood” comes from an ancient Germanic word meaning “shining”.

When attached to any noun like “neighbor”
it meant a shining example of what it means to be
a neighbor.

Slowly, it became attached to other words
like “priest-hood”, “man-hood”, “woman-hood”
“adult-hood”, even “false-hood”
which were each shining examples of those nouns.

Gosh, I wonder if “Robin-hood”
was a shining example of robbing people?

At any rate, in all those cases, “Hoods” are never places,
but the ARE about where people live - live spiritually.

People are defined by their womanhood or manhood.

Priests live in their priesthood.

Liars live in their “falsehood”,

sometimes so totally they lose touch with reality!

On this Sunday before Valentines,
I want to talk about VICTIM-HOOD.

When our culture celebrates love -
we - as the church - as Christians - should celebrate
the love of Christ.

And Christ's love has special favor for the victims
of the world.

Author Philip Yancy once said,

**“Though the world may be tilted toward the rich
and powerful, God is tilted toward the underdog.”**

Jesus' 1st sermon shows us his mission statement of love.

*“The spirit of the Lord is upon me...to bring good news
to the poor, release to the captive, sight to the blind
and liberation to the oppressed...”*

From another preacher I once heard:

**“Jesus famous list of whom Christ favors:
the stranger, the naked, the homeless, the hungry,
the thirsty, the imprisoned and the least
are not a list of the unlucky, the lazy or the
unworthy, they are a list of the victimized.”**

This is where any understanding of victim-hood must
start - with victimization.

First, there's personal victimization -
often of an aggressive, invasive, physical kind,

like assault, molestation and rape.

There's also psychological victimization,
especially during childhood,
such as witnessing violence,
or being raised, saturated in conflict, anger or propaganda.

Victimization can even be passive

such as that of childhood neglect.

Someone once said, "the victimization begins
when someone steals a child's sense of "special-ness".

Which sounds similar to when Jesus said,

"Woe be those who cause any little ones to stumble..."

Victimization can also be on a huge and collective scale;
like the Holocaust toward Jews, Gypsies & Gays.

Or slavery in America toward Africans and Natives.

Or White Supremacy toward just about everyone
who isn't like them.

And then there's the sad reminder of Covid,
that victimization can happen naturally.

Not as an act of God but a whim of cruel fate.

Whenever I watch those commercials for St. Jude
Children's Hospital - I think about the victimization
that happens by accident.

But in any and all cases,
victimization is sad and wrong and immoral

and to be combated with every ounce of the compassion and justice of Jesus.

But one of the saddest wrongs of victimization is how it scars a person or a people for life.

It scars the human soul.

It can distort a person's view of the world.

It can contaminate marriages, sex life, parenting, grand-parenting, friendships, professional life, and even your relationship with God.

It can taint a person's joy & happiness for ever.

Counselors say that victim-hood is how many victims try to protect themselves from being further victimized.

Many times I see how victim-hood is compensation for how people were victimized as a child, but alas, those compensatory strategies as an adult end up harming the victims even more.

So, instead of a liberation, victim-hood becomes a life sentence.

The more I study the famous "Love Chapter" from 1 Cor. 13, the more I see it as a pathway to "victory over victim-hood."

Especially the verses Judy read for us earlier.

“Love is patient; love is kind” -

so much of a person’s anger and impatience
are echos of childhood wounded-ness.

This is why so many abusers of children
were themselves abused AS ~~children~~ ^{as child.}

“Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.”

Show me an adult who brags and boasts and struts
with arrogance, and I’ll bet they are compensating
for being neglected, berated, belittled or bullied
as children.

“(Love) does not insist on its own way.”

In marriage or in parenting or in life in general,
this kind of behavior
stems from what a person saw modeled for them
at home.

What they hated as a child,
ironically, they perpetuated as an adult.

“(Love) does not keep a record of wrongs.”

Victim-hood has a long and tenacious memory.
A memory of wrongs.

Last Sunday I was on vacation.

As a substitute for church I often listen to Krista Tippett
and her radio talk show, **“On Being”**

Her guest last week was a profound thinker
by the name of Trabian Shorters.

He was a black man who grew up with his grandparents
in a modest, hardworking, church-going family
down south.

Mostly thanks to his grandmother,
Trabian was raised with a hunger for learning.

Far beyond his financial possibilities
he applied and was accepted into a prestigious
prep school in Michigan named Cranbrook.

There it was found that Trabian was a genius.

Thus he went on to college and is now the CEO
of a successful consulting business and motivational
speaker. He invented an idea,
that has caught on like wild fire
in changing the cultures of companies
whole communities and thousands of individuals.
His idea is called, ASSET-FRAMING.

Asset-framing is basic and soulful.

It is defining yourself by your gifts.

By what you love to do and be. By what you're good at.

Asset-framing means believing in your capabilities
more than your liabilities.

Asset-framing means seeing your life
as blessing not curse.

Dr. Shorter's says far too many people in our country grow up with Deficit-framing, not Asset-framing.

Deficit framing is when a person defines themselves by their deficits, by their flaws, by their mistakes, by their wounded-ness, by their enemies, by their guilt, by their shame.

Essentially, people get defined by their victim-hood.

He brings up the example of much education in America.

Many students are channeled by IEPs - in other words ways to cope with learning disabilities.

They are often called "Children at Risk".

That is a prime example of Deficit-framing.

He goes on to say that more and more, we Americans live in "cultures of deficit-framing".

We surround ourselves with fellow victims and saturate ourselves in our stories of victimization.

We do it racially, economically, religiously.

And most of all we do it politically.

Our landscape of our modern politics is dominated by deficit-framing.

The way to free ourselves from all this is Asset-framing - defining ourselves, not by our flaws, not by our failures, not by our wounded-ness, but by how we are loved and blest by God.

And so, when 1 Cor. 13 says

“do not keep a record of wrongs, but rejoice in truth.”

it's not saying forgive and forget,

it's saying move on from your victimization.

Once you live your life by Asset-framing, you are able to

“bears all things, believe all things, hope all things,

endure all things...”

One of the great stories of victory over victim-hood

is that of Fred Rogers,

of “Mister Roger’s Neighborhood” fame.

When Fred was a little boy growing up he was obese.

For it he was ridiculed mercilessly.

“Fat Freddy” was what he was called

and that defined him for much of his youth

and young adulthood.

But his life of faith in the love of God

that propelled him to become a Presbyterian minister

and later to become one of the most influential

TV educators and motivators of young children

healed his victimization.

Do you recall his famous one-liner he’d always

say to kids?

“Remember, you are special.”

In an interview after his death, his widow, Joanne said,
**“Mister Rogers would never have become Mister Rogers
without Fat Freddy.”**

In closing, the question to all of us is this:

“Are you a victim of victim-hood”“

**Do you define yourself by your deficits,
by your wounds?**

**Do you live in a culture that saturates your thinking
with your victimization instead of your blessed-ness?”**

Psychologists offer us this little 4-question test
to help us assess ourselves.

- 1. It is important to you that people who hurt you
acknowledge the harm they’ve done?**
- 2. Do you believe that your relationships of love
and friendships are a vast improvement
over the mistreatment you received growing up?**
- 3. When you and your actions hurt those close to you
are you quick to defend yourself and the justice
of those actions?**
- 4. Is it hard for you to stop thinking about the hurt
and injustice others have done to you?**

If you answered “Yes” to 3 or more of these,
you are probably a victim of your victim-hood.

And 1 Cor. offers us a way to love ourselves to victory.

“Love is patient; love is kind;

love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way.

It is not irritable or resentful.

*It does not keep a record of wrongs,
but rejoices in the truth.*

*Love bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things...”*

