

MIRACLE...TO HEAL THIS WOUND
Matthew 5:43-48

It Would Take A Miracle Series
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I know that this has happened to each one of us. You're driving along in your car on a warm summer day when all of a sudden a large bug flies into your windshield and splatters in a mess right in front of you. It is at eye level right in the middle of your sight line.

Now the troubling thing is that even though this stain is only about the size of a quarter you can't stop looking at it. You try to look above, below, or around it, but your eyes keep coming back to this spot. You try to distract yourself, but you cannot escape this blob.

Then, of course, you may try what I have periodically done. You try to wash it off with your washer fluid and wipers. The problem, however, is that you now often spread this bug stuff around and continue to have a remnant of this stain that won't disappear.

My friends this real life experience is much like what happens when we are wounded, or hurt deeply, by someone or some event. It may be a friend who turned against you; an ex-spouse who betrayed you; or someone who told others some cruel things about you.

Perhaps it was a business partner who lied to you or ruined your reputation; a person in the community, on that school committee, or in the church who spread gossip and untruths about you to others—a wound to your self-esteem and character.

I'm sure that most every one of us have had people wound us in these or in other ways. Regardless of how it happened, it becomes like a stain on the windshield of our lives. In other words, it is often difficult to look around it, to ignore it, to forget about it.

It may pop up in the middle of the night when you can't sleep—you just keep thinking about, and obsessing on, and getting angry again over what has happened. Even hearing that person's name, or being in the place it happened, can reopen this wound and the feelings that go with it.

Have you ever been in a store and you see at a distance a person who caused, or was part of, a wound in your heart? A sharp pain fills you with hurtful and sad feelings. You try to duck down an aisle to avoid them, or if they see you, try to act like you don't notice them at all.

Now I realize that as Christian people you hopefully have tried to pray about this. You have asked God to take away the hurt, and even to forgive the other person. But like the washer fluid and wiper, the stain may not all be gone—these feelings just keep coming back to you.

These weeks our worship focus is on, "It Would Take a Miracle." And today, of course, we are focusing on how "it would take a miracle of God to heal this wound." The truth is that wounds like this can only be healed through God's miraculous love and power.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:44, *“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”* And Jesus prayed from the cross for those wounding him, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* (Lk 23)

Jesus’ will for you and me is that the wounds, the bitterness, the hurts that may be deeply imbedded in our minds and hearts be healed. Jesus’ will is that we find forgiveness for those who have wounded us—that we find healing for our scars; can put it behind us and move on.

You may remember that powerful scene in the movie, “Forest Gump.” Jenni, of course, was abused as a young girl by her alcoholic father, and her turbulent life as an adult has greatly been affected by this devastating hurt. Well, one day Jenni and Forest are walking past her childhood home where her father abused her.

“Sometimes there just aren’t enough rocks.” Wow, most of us can identify with these feelings. And yet rather than throwing rocks at an old memory, or allowing your feelings to strangle you, what are some constructive ways you can deal with these hurts and possibly find healing?

Well, one way is by talking to a pastor, a counselor, a trained mentor. Wounds often grow and multiply when we keep them to ourselves. Our minds have a way of playing tricks on us when we go over these thoughts, and feelings, again and again in our minds.

In fact, a hurt that starts out relatively small can grow many times larger, and the person you are mad at can become many times more evil, when you obsess on these things all alone. In fact, it is often difficult to remember what is truly fact and what details you may have embellished.

That is why it is so important to talk to someone who is trained to listen. Not someone who simply takes our side, or who may even make it worse, but someone who can help you sort out what really happened, to look at it from different angles, and to understand your pain.

Many people have found some wonderful and miraculous healing through counseling and therapy. God often brings healing when you talk things out, get some constructive advice, and when you pray with another. God does not want you to handle your hurts by yourself.

Another way to deal openly with a hurt is to write a letter to the person who may have hurt you. Write this letter—but do not mail it—at least right away. Write your feelings as descriptively as you can. Use “I” sentences (I’m feeling) rather than “You make me feel” sentences.

Then take this letter and put it in a drawer for a few days. Take it out in a few days, read it again, and then assess if your feelings are the same. As you do this a few times, you may start seeing what happened in a different light, and may be able to see your part in the problem.

Each time you read over this letter, pray for this person and for the situation. Pray for the healing of your wound. The reality is that you will most likely never send this letter. And when, or if, you do talk with that person you will be in a better place to find reconciliation.

One warning in this—don’t use e-mail/Facebook for any of this. Some of us have learned the hard and painful way that it is too easy to click “send” and put some highly charged words into cyberspace. Write your feelings down and look at them when you are thinking more rational.

Another way to deal openly with a wound is to talk to that person directly. This, of course, is the ideal way, but is often the most difficult. To do it well takes skills like listening to what is really being said, keeping one's emotions in control, and admitting to our part in the problem.

Doing this hard work of reconciliation, unfortunately, does not happen very often. It is much easier to simply blame others than to look at ways you may have contributed to the conflict. It is much easier to justify your own actions, than to find repentance and reconciliation.

It is easier in our society to run away from the problem—to stop seeing a friend, join a different group, go to a different church, put your child in a different school—than to do the difficult work of finding healing. And as a result, the wound does not heal or go away.

Now I need to clarify that this does not mean that you will necessarily be best friends with these people, or that you will need to enjoy their company and hang out with them. Even when there is forgiveness it is okay to not really want to be their best friends.

To find forgiveness, however, means that you let the hurt go, and let the healing of the wound begin. It is a miracle that only God can bring. Then we can pray for the other, wish good things for them, and not harbor resentment. It is loving others as Jesus has loved us.

It is interesting that a few years ago, at a conference I attended, that I heard two people share about a reconciliation process that has been happening in Rwanda. As you may remember, back in 1994 a genocide happened in Rwanda where nearly 1-million Tsutsis were killed by the country's Hutu ethnic majority in a 100-day rampage.

The really sad thing is that the majority of Tsutsis and Hutu's are Christians—it was Christians killing other Christians who happened to be of a different tribe and ethnic background. The remarkable thing is that now over 10 years later some 40,000 prisoners who participated in the genocide are being tried in community courts.

These community courts, in many cases, are often releasing these prisoners back into the communities they helped destroy for community service and reconciliation. Without hope of full justice, and being able to pin specific crimes on people, Rwanda is turning to reconciliation.

One of the people I heard at this conference has made a film about this titled, "As We Forgive." It explains how survivors are forgiving the killers who may have destroyed their families, and is showing their journey from death to life through forgiveness. (View video trailer)

When I see the miraculous power of God's forgiveness in Rwanda, and how wounds are being healed, I think of how small and selfish my wounds often are. And I am also reminded that if God can heal people's wounds in Rwanda, his miraculous love can certainly heal me.

So, my friend, as you are living your life each day what stains and wounds are on the windshield of your life? What hurts are you having a hard time letting go of? I want you to take the blank slip of paper in your bulletin and write the first name of someone who may have wounded you.

Write this name, fold it, and put it in the box that is coming up the rows. When we have all of them, we will pray over them that God's miracle of healing will completely wipe your windshield clean and will give you peace. (Pause—Let us pray)