

Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ – Los Angeles
Tenth Sunday After Pentecost – July 22, 2018 – SUMMER of HEALING
Rev. Anne G. Cohen, Minister
Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

FOR REFLECTION

“The sad thing that many of us empaths don’t realize is that often our desire to heal others is a disguised cry for help for our own healing. Because many of us weren’t taught how to value or nurture ourselves at a young age, we tend to unconsciously seek out our own healing in the healing of others.”

~ Mateo Sol, Awakened Empath: The Ultimate Guide to Emotional, Psychological and Spiritual Healing

“Healing facilitates lasting change; change facilitates healing.”

~ Sharon Weil, ChangeAbility: How Artists, Activists, and Awakeners Navigate Change

Healing Our Healers

When I was 17 our family was involved in a serious car accident. Ever since then, I’ve had chiropractic treatments regularly to keep my back and neck in some semblance of alignment. The first 30 years I was treated at a chiropractic school and had many opportunities to ask the interns why they chose their field of medicine. Nine times out of ten they told the story of how they were injured and how chiropractic treatments helped or saved them.

If you ask psychotherapists why they chose their profession, many would tell you that they had a messed-up childhood or they were exposed to mental illness or they had an emotionally traumatic experience. Those events led to therapy and a desire to help others in the same way.

As for ministers, most of us have been wrestling with G-d our entire lifetimes – and have experienced the “dark night of the soul” more than once.

And then there are social change agents – activists and artists and organizers. Most of these characters have experienced or been exposed to an injustice – lived in poverty, walked down the street while black, got paid less because of their gender. Some are born compassionate and are sensitive to the suffering of others – taking it on as their own. Jesus was probably both – born an empathic human, shamed by the marital status of his mother when conceived, and living under Roman oppression.

Most people in healing professions have been wounded in some way.

“Wounded healer” is a term created by psychologist Carl Jung. The idea states that an analyst is compelled to treat patients because the analyst him(or her)self

is "wounded"... Research has shown that 73.9% of counselors and psychotherapists have experienced one or more wounding experiences leading to their career choice...

For Jung, "a good half of every treatment that probes at all deeply – consists in the doctor's examining him(*or her*)self... it is his/*her* own hurt that gives a measure of his/*her* power to heal. This, and nothing else, is the meaning of the Greek myth of the wounded physician."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wounded_healer

The Greek myth Jung referred to is the Myth of Chiron (KY-REN).

Chiron was notable throughout Greek mythology for his youth-nurturing nature. His personal skills tend to match those of Apollo, his foster father... medicine, music, archery, hunting, gymnastics and the art of prophecy. Chiron was known for his knowledge and skill with medicine and thus, was credited with the discovery of botany and pharmacy, the science of herbs and medicine...

Chiron was pierced with an arrow belonging to Heracles that had been treated with the [*poisonous*] blood of the Hydra...Ironically, Chiron, the master of the healing arts, could not heal himself and willingly gave up his immortality.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiron>

The character **Dr. House**, from the television series of the same name, can be considered as an example of this archetype in modern pop culture; his physical and emotional scars are both a burden and a driving force in his need to fix the problems of others while destroying himself.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wounded_healer

When I was in seminary I read The Wounded Healer: MINISTRY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY by HENRI NOUWEN (1932-1996) a Dutch Catholic priest. In summary, the book lays out:

... a balanced and creative theology of service that begins with the realization of fundamental woundedness in human nature. Emphasizing that which is in humanity common to both minister and believer, this woundedness can serve as a source of strength and healing when counseling others. Nouwen proceeds to develop his approach to ministry with an analysis of sufferings — a suffering world, a suffering generation, a suffering person, and a suffering minister. It is his contention that ministers are called to recognize the sufferings of their time in their own hearts and make that recognition the starting point of their service. For Nouwen, ministers must be willing to go beyond their professional role and leave themselves open as fellow human beings with the same wounds and suffering — in the image of Christ. In other words, we heal from our own wounds.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/122882/the-wounded-healer-by-henri-j-m-nouwen/9780385148030/>

This is the theory behind the advice from my homiletics professor, "Never preach a sermon YOU don't need to hear." And that applies to anything we teach – like the

workshops at our Church Retreat on “Compassionate Communication.” Teaching is a way of reminding ourselves to continue learning and practicing what we teach.

Here are a few quotations from Nouwen that are at the heart of his theology:

Who can save a child from a burning house without taking the risk of being hurt by the flames? Who can listen to a story of loneliness and despair without taking the risk of experiencing similar pains in his own heart and even losing his precious peace of mind? In short: Who can take away suffering without entering it?

— Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*

The great illusion of leadership is to think that *[hu]man[s]* can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there.

— Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*

This calls to mind Moses, certainly a wounded person who led his people into – and then almost out of – the wilderness. Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness not only echoes the Moses story, it confirms that Jesus, too, is someone who has “been there” and can understand that kind of suffering.

Here’s Nouwen again:

Nobody escapes being wounded. We are all wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not, 'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed, but 'How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?' When our wounds cease to be a source of shame, and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers.

— Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*

And one more:

Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the Beloved.

https://www.azquotes.com/author/10905-Henri_Nouwen

The 13th century Persian poet, Rumi, noted that “The wound is where the light enters.” And our 20th century Canadian poet, Leonard Cohen, reiterated, “There is a crack in everything, it’s where the light gets in.”

Which leaves us with the question: How does the healer find healing for him or herself? Our text this morning suggests that going on retreat might be helpful. Jesus says to his disciples:

"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

The problem for Jesus and his people was that they couldn’t really get away.

33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them...

Compassion can kill you. We have some sense of this in our current political and social crisis. It is hard to keep watching the news – and it's hard to take a break from the suffering being caused by current policies. But we do have to keep ourselves sane and healthy in order to continue healing the world. We are PART of this world and we are directly responsible for the HEALTH of THIS PART of the world.

John Pavlovitz, American progressive Christian writer, gave us this advice this week in "An Open Letter to Those Who Still Give a Damn" JULY 21, 2018 / JOHN PAVLOVITZ

Extend some of that compassion you're so willing to extend to the world—to yourself. Take some time to step away from the fray and the fight. It will still be there when you return, and you'll be better able to face it.

Friend, I know you're exhausted. If you're not exhausted right now your empathy is busted. But I also know that you aren't alone. Millions of people are as tired as you are right now.

We too, live in disbelief at how callous so many people we know and love have become.

We too, are incredulous witnessing our elected leaders and parents and neighbors and pastors and parents and favorite aunts abandon any semblance of kindness.

We too, feel the fatigue of believing we're doing this damn-giving alone.

You are in good company, so keep going. Fight like hell to keep your heart soft, even while so many people have become hardened.

Yes, the world is upside-down right now, but we can make it right—one beautiful act of decency at a time. Get some rest and keep going. The world needs people like you.

Blessed are the damn-givers, for they will right-side the world.

An Open Letter to Those Who Still Give a Damn
JULY 21, 2018 / JOHN PAVLOVITZ

Two years ago Nancy DeNero taught a number of us about the need for self-compassion and how to practice it.

During Lent this year Aimee Hopkins gave us numerous tools for reducing and managing anxiety – taking care of ourselves.

We all have ways we have found to rest and heal ourselves – from the daily barrage of bad news –

from the more and more common tragedies like hostage-taking at Trader Joe's in Silver Lake and random shootings in public places –

from compounding losses of family members and colleagues and friends like Jonathan Gold to cancer and other terminal conditions.

Let's share some of our strategies with each other – and then engage in those strategies, not just this week or this summer – but regularly.

As people dedicated to healing our communities and our world, it behooves us to keep ourselves alive and on our feet.

Where shall we begin?

- Daily 5-10 min. meditation or quietness...
- Coloring, SoulCollage, engaging in something creative...
- Regular exercise, enough sleep, healthy diet...
- Vacation, Staycation...
- Xx
- Xx
- Xx
- Xx
- Xx

Scripture Reading for Sunday July 22, 2018 – Tenth after Pentecost – Year B

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56 (NRSV)

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. 54 When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, 55 and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Chiron was notable throughout Greek mythology for his youth-nurturing nature. His personal skills tend to match those of Apollo, his foster father (sometimes along with Artemis): medicine, music, archery, hunting, gymnastics and the art of prophecy. Chiron was known for his knowledge and skill with medicine and thus, was credited with the discovery of botany and pharmacy, the science of herbs and medicine.

Chiron was pierced with an arrow belonging to Heracles that had been treated with the blood of the Hydra...Ironically, Chiron, the master of the healing arts, could not heal himself and willingly gave up his immortality.

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"The wound is where the light enters." – Rumi

Wounded healer is a term created by psychologist Carl Jung. The idea states that an analyst is compelled to treat patients because the analyst himself is "wounded". The idea may have Greek mythology origins. Research has shown that 73.9% of counselors and psychotherapists have experienced one or more wounding experiences leading to their career choice.

As an example, of the "wounded healer phenomenon" between an analyst and his/her analyzed:

The analyst is consciously aware of his own personal wounds. These wounds may be activated in certain situations especially if the analyzed wounds are similar to his own.

The analyzed wounds affect the wounds of the analyst. The analyst either consciously or unconsciously passes this awareness back to his analyzed, causing an unconscious relationship to take place between analyst and analyzed.

Cultural analogues

Akira Kurosawa's 1948 film *Drunken Angel* centers upon the efforts of Doctor Sanada, himself an alcoholic, to sustain a young gangster against tuberculosis, counseling him to abandon his self-destructive lifestyle.

The character **Dr. House**, from the television series of the same name, can be considered as an example of this archetype in modern pop culture; his physical and emotional scars are both a burden and a driving force in his need to fix the problems of others while destroying himself.

In *East Coker*, T. S. Eliot wrote of "The wounded surgeon plies the steel/That questions the distempered part".

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wounded_healer

ABOUT THE WOUNDED HEALER

The *Wounded Healer* is a hope-filled and profoundly simple book that speaks directly to those men and women who want to be of service in their church or community, but have found the traditional ways often threatening and ineffective. In this book, Henri Nouwen combines creative case studies of ministry with stories from diverse cultures and religious traditions in preparing a new model for ministry. Weaving keen cultural analysis with his psychological and religious insights, Nouwen has come up with a balanced and creative theology of service that begins with the realization of fundamental woundedness in human nature. Emphasizing that which is in humanity common to both minister and believer, this woundedness can serve as a source of strength and healing when counseling others. Nouwen proceeds to develop his approach to ministry with an analysis of sufferings — a suffering world, a suffering generation, a suffering person, and a suffering minister. It is his contention that ministers are called to recognize the sufferings of their time in their own hearts and make that recognition the starting point of their service. For Nouwen, ministers must be willing to go beyond their professional role and leave themselves open as fellow human beings with the same wounds and suffering — in the image of Christ. In other words, we heal from our own wounds.

The Wounded Healer

MINISTRY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

By HENRI NOUWEN

Henri J. M. Nouwen (1932-1996) was a Catholic priest who taught at several theological institutions and universities in his home country of the Netherlands and in the United States. He spent the final years of his life teaching and ministering to the mentally and physically disabled at the L'Arche Daybreak Community in Toronto, Canada.

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"Who can save a child from a burning house without taking the risk of being hurt by the flames? Who can listen to a story of loneliness and despair without taking the risk of experiencing similar pains in his own heart and even losing his precious peace of mind? In short: "Who can take away suffering without entering it?"

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“The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there.”

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“every Christian is constantly invited to overcome his neighbor’s fear by entering into it with him, and to find in the fellowship of suffering the way to freedom.”

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Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the Beloved.

— Henri J.M. Nouwen

Real grief is not healed by time... if time does anything, it deepens our grief. The longer we live, the more fully we become aware of who she was for us, and the more intimately we experience what her love meant for us. Real, deep love is, as you know, very unobtrusive, seemingly easy and obvious, and so present that we take it for granted. Therefore, it is only in retrospect - or better, in memory - that we fully realize its power and depth. Yes, indeed, love often makes itself visible in pain.

— Henri J.M. Nouwen

https://www.azquotes.com/author/10905-Henri_Nouwen

12 Signs You Are The “Wounded Healer” Personality Archetype

By Brianna Wiest, January 20th 2016

1. When you give other people advice, it feels like you are telling your younger self what you needed to hear. It's this dynamic that makes you love to help others. Healing them heals you.
2. Since you were little, you've known that you wanted to help people. You may not have known how you were going to do it, but you were aware that you wouldn't be happy unless your life amounted to service in some capacity.
3. Being recognized for your work is both your most intense desire, and your worst fear. You want other people to see you as a healer or teacher or writer or whatever, but at the same time, your deepest, most conflicting fear is being seen in that way.
4. You believe that without struggle, you cannot truly know happiness. You believe that there is a purpose in suffering, and that it is so we can see with complete clarity what it means to be at peace.
5. It's hard not to let your work become your life. You give everything you have to what you do – and sometimes it's hard for you to know when to draw a line. Your work is your life, but you wouldn't have it any other way.
6. You sometimes help too much, and struggle to let people self-heal. You've learned the hard way that often, you can tell people the answer, but until they figure it out themselves, it won't truly resonate.
7. Criticism feels particularly painful to you. As someone who has been deprived of love in some way (that's what all wounds are made of, FYI) sometimes criticism can sting more than it should (but you pull through).
8. You are grateful for the difficulties you went through. You recognize that the most painful times in your life were the most deeply transformative; without them, you would not be who you are or where you are. They were necessary (and transitory).
9. You are always working on yourself. You are committed to self-growth, and you are always open to ways you could be more open-minded, more loving, or more aware.

10. You want to fix everything, sometimes to a fault. It's hard for you to see the difference between being a perfectionist and being driven toward the life you want. You often blur the line between dedication and near-insanity.

11. You have a very sound sense of purpose. You know why you're here, and you know what you're here to do, even if it's just be present and be as kind as you can.

12. Your life goal is to know that you helped even just one person, even just a little. You don't have to save the world, and in fact, you don't really care to. All you want to know is that you helped at least one person in their life. That, to you, is success.

<https://thoughtcatalog.com/brianna-wiest/2016/01/12-signs-you-are-the-wounded-healer-personality-archetype/>