



The Enemy Within

The scene is a room, far from the marketplace in Jerusalem. The location is shared in secret among the followers and disciples, for they are afraid of the Romans and the Pharisees. Jesus came and stood among them, saying, *“do not be afraid.”*

He walked around the room, showing the wounds He had suffered, in His wrists, His feet, His side. He paused at one disciple and they spoke quietly, a private conversation, then Thomas knelt, head bowed, tears in his eyes. Forgiveness.

Then Jesus spoke to those disciples, and to us, saying, *“Go and forgive each other, love your enemies, pray for those who insult you, come as a child, trusting, forgiving.”*

Where forgiveness is absent or in short supply, resentment grows, and slights become large, little hurts distract from love, and you find you’re carrying a burden that becomes heavier with each breath. Forgiveness is hard and it is easy. Easy? Yes. When pride is removed, and self-serving is pushed aside, forgiveness floods the void, and heals.

When the 1986 movie, The Mission, was released, it slipped into the public domain with little fanfare. Beautifully filmed in South Africa, part of the true story focusses on Mendoza, a repentant slave trader, seeking forgiveness, who accompanies a group of Jesuits returning to their mission among the Guarani. He is seen dragging a heavy bundle containing his armor and sword, repeatedly refusing any help along the way. In one climactic scene, Mendoza, on the verge of being swept away, and over the falls, is saved by natives who cut away the heavy bundle. An act of forgiveness. Mendoza is stunned, his life transformed, and eventually he takes vows and becomes a Jesuit.

What burdens us? What happens within us when we see peaceful demonstrators being gassed, before a church in our nation’s capital? How does injustice affect you? Did something

happen in church that drove you away, and you can't forget it? Did a misunderstanding with a loved one drive a wedge in your relationship? How is your level of anger? Your 'grudge-quotient'? What are you carrying around in that bundle, that is holding you back, that you refuse to defuse?

Most of the time breathing is a physical act, necessary for life. But, there is another breathing, a sense of being free, of not being resentful, when forgiveness is truly given and received. There is a cleansing to the act. "Forgive each other" is what our Lord tells us. It is hard and it is easy, get yourself out of the equation, set aside your pride, your grudge, your hurts, and, child of God, love your neighbor.

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This essay was the Meditation in Stan Escott's [Watchword](#) for June 5, 2020. These regular words of encouragement, reflection, scripture and devotional prayer, born from the Covid-induced isolation of a small Bible study group, are now available online. To explore Watchwords or sign up for the mailings, visit bosworth30.com/watchwords/.