

“Unchristian Christians”

Luke 22:47-53

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It was a powerful statement and certainly caught my attention. I was sitting in a conference and heard Dr. Timothy George say, “**The last miracle Jesus performed was healing a wound caused by one of his own disciples.**” I knew one day I would preach a sermon around that penetrating idea and that day has arrived.

Following the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. While there, a contingent of religious leaders and soldiers, led by Judas, approached Jesus. When it became obvious that they were there to arrest Jesus, Peter drew a sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus rebuked Peter and healed the wound caused by him.

“The last miracle Jesus performed was healing a wound caused by one of his own disciples.” What was most significant about this miracle was not that Jesus healed a wound of an enemy while under great stress, but that he healed a wound caused by one of his own followers. That speaks volumes to me. Let me share my thoughts.

The actions of Simon Peter tell me that Christians are capable of hurting others. Peter was a Christian. I have no doubt of that. However, he hurt another person and hurt him badly. As a matter of fact, scholars believe that Peter was trying to kill the high priest’s servant. He was not aiming for his ear, but his neck!

I wish I could say that Peter’s behavior was uncommon and isolated. I don’t believe that to be the case. Believers are as capable of hurting others as non-believers and their wrath can be directed toward total strangers, dear friends or close family members.

How do believers hurt others? There is a variety of ways. Sometimes we hurt others with words. We say things that are unkind or untrue and inflict piercing emotional pain upon others. We hurt people by ignoring them and acting as if they don’t exist. We hurt others by trying to manipulate and control them so they will fulfill our selfish desires. We hurt people when we exploit them for selfish gain. We hurt people when we become violent and inflict bodily harm upon them as Peter did that dreadful night.

Why do believers do such things? Why did Peter hurt another? From what I have read about Peter, he had an explosive personality. He was quick to react, especially when he or others were threatened. I think his actions that night were instinctual. Someone he loved was being mistreated, so he reacted by mistreating someone else. That’s the world’s way of dealing with danger or anger and Peter was well versed in the law of the land.

We understand that mentality, too, don’t we? When we are threatened, frustrated, jealous, angry or hurt, we look for someone to take it out on. We say cruel things or commit despicable deeds. I wish this was not so, but it is and we do no good denying it.

How does Jesus feel about his followers hurting others? How did he respond to Peter’s violent behavior? He did not like it and rebuked Peter. Then, he reversed what Peter did by healing the wound Peter caused.

Do you know what this tells me? It tells me that Jesus can heal the wound of one who has been hurt. Perhaps you are here today and you are a victim of neglect or abuse.

Even though your pain is chronic and severe, there is hope. Jesus cares about you and wants to help heal your wound. I hope you will let him.

I'll tell you something else I sense in this story. I believe Jesus can also heal the person who is hurting others and put an end to his or her destructive behavior. Do you think this incident had an impact on Peter? I believe so. It had to cause him to look critically at his explosive personality and tame it. It had to make a difference in the way he reacted to adversity and treated other people.

In a comic strip, "For Better or for Worse," by Lynn Johnston, she shows Michael pushing his sister Lizzie out of his room and slamming the door on her finger. Next, she shows the family in the emergency room getting Lizzie's broken finger bandaged. Walking out of the hospital, Michael tells Lizzie he is sorry. "It's ok, Michael. My finger won't hurt forever," Lizzie said. "I know," Michael said, "but my memory will."

Jesus can heal bad memories and help you change behavior if you will let him. I hope you will and I imagine I am not alone.