

## **“The Wounded Healer”**

### **Isaiah 53:1-5**

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor  
Smoke Rise Baptist Church  
Stone Mountain, Georgia  
February 13, 2005

### **Communion Devotion**

He has been my friend for over twenty years. He is one of the most gifted preachers I know. His ability to speak and write is exceptional. He can draw a picture with words as well as anyone I know.

Our paths have not crossed for a few years because he moved to Texas just before I came to Atlanta. Things did not work out so well for him there, though. He got a divorce and resigned as the pastor of one of Dallas' leading churches.

We reunited at a conference two weeks ago. I was so glad to see him.

This is a conference made up of ministers that serve churches in metropolitan areas throughout our country. It is small in number with about twenty-five attending each year. This is by design. Close friendships are formed as each member shares what God is doing in his life and church. In addition, those attending each year draft the agenda for the conference in the first session by ranking the topics of most importance to be discussed. This means the ideas discussed are pertinent, practical and relevant.

When my friend shared with the group what his life had been like in recent years, my heart broke. He described a life with a lot of pain, disappointment and broken dreams. In the midst of his testimony, he said, **“I have discovered, however, that grace puddles up in wounds.”**

He then proceeded to tell us about healing and hope. “The pain is still there,” he said, “but it is not all that is there. Now there is hope for a new life. Grace and pain are coexisting and healing is on the horizon.”

**“I have discovered that grace puddles up in wounds.”** I'll never forget this phrase or the moment I heard it. I'll share it with many, beginning with you.

As he talked that morning, I wondered what the source of this much-needed grace was and what forms it took. Listening to him, I realized that wounded healers dispensed his grace. Grace came to him from those who were struggling with their own pain walking in unmarked shadows. Through phone calls, e-mails and lunch encounters, his grace givers spoke from compassionate hearts to heal his broken heart. Their very presence, words of encouragement and examples of endurance kept him going when he wanted to quit.

How biblical this is. Grace and hope come through pain, our own and others, including God. Even Jesus recognized that he was to be a suffering servant, one who brought the gift of healing through pain. Perhaps Isaiah's words of comfort and hope to ancient Israel taught him the value and importance of being a wounded healer.

“By his wounds we are healed.” However you want to interpret Isaiah's words, one thing is sure. Healing doesn't come without sacrifice. The broken hearted heal broken hearts.

In Henri Nouwen's book, The Wounded Healer, he shares a story from the Talmud. A rabbi asked Elijah when the Messiah would come. “Go and ask him yourself,” Elijah replied. “Where is he?” asked the rabbi? “Sitting at the city gates,” Elijah told him.

“How shall I know him?” the rabbi wondered. “He is sitting among the poor covered with wounds,” said Elijah. “The others unbind all their wounds at the same time and then bind them up again. But he unbinds his wounds one at a time and binds it up again, saying to himself, ‘Perhaps I shall be needed. If so, I must always be ready so as not to delay for a moment.’ ”

What was the source of my friend’s grace? It came from wounded healers, friends and sometimes strangers willing to help him while struggling with their own problems. The people that helped him had bandages all over them.

When Bill and Claire Smith got in the car to go to the cemetery after their son’s funeral last Saturday, Bill saw a friend standing on the sidewalk preparing to go to his car. He could hardly believe that this man attended Wes’ funeral and got out of the car to embrace and speak to him. This man’s wife died of cancer twelve hours before Wes. He, too, was carrying a heavy load of grief and planning a funeral for his dear mate, but took time out to console Bill and Claire. On Wednesday, Claire’s birthday by the way, Bill and Claire attended the funeral for this friend’s mate. That’s how grace puddles up in wounds.

In light of Isaiah’s words of hope and the examples I’ve shared today, I challenge you to do two things during this time of communion meditation. Ask God to help you in the midst of your own struggles to be sensitive to others’ needs, ready to help them. Become a wounded healer. Your world and mine is filled with hurting people struggling under heavy loads. Help them carry their burden even while you carry your own.

Secondly, open your life to those that are reaching out to you to help you in your time of need. Allow them to bring the gift of grace into your situation so that pain will not be “all there is.”

Especially open your life to the Suffering Servant, Jesus, who knows what it is like to bury dreams and struggle with disappointment. Allow him to give you the strength, courage, patience, peace and hope you need as you walk down unfamiliar roads. As you do, you will discover that grace really does puddle up in wounds.