

“Wounded Healers”

Isaiah 53:1-5

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Communion Devotion

Her story will inspire you and break your heart. Out of six thousand contestants, she was picked by *Good Morning America* and Simon and Schuster to have her life story published. After reading about her, I understand why.

Farah Ahmedi was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. On her way to school as a second grader, she stepped on a landmine. The blast tore off her left leg below the knee and permanently damaged her right leg. She spent two and one-half years in a German hospital separated from family and friends. She cried herself to sleep most nights.

Soon after she returned home to her family in Afghanistan, a bomb hit her home. Her father and two sisters were killed. All her possessions were destroyed. “Nothing was left,” Farah wrote in her book, *The Story of My Life*, “except memories and tears.”

To make matters worse, two months later, her brothers fled to Pakistan, fearing they would be drafted by the Taliban. They have never been heard from since.

Farah and her mother escaped to Pakistan where they lived in a refugee camp for four years and worked as servants for local families. Farah was unable to attend school and as a result never learned to read or write. In addition, she was ridiculed by some of her peers because she could not walk as other children.

In May, 2002, Farah and her mother were brought to Chicago by a refugee relief group. Farah recalled when she came to America, “I felt like we were in heaven.”

With the help of their mentoring family, John and Alice Litz, Farah and her mother were able to start a new life. Farah was able to resume her education and is now a senior in high school where she is a stellar student. She is also a youth ambassador for the United Nation’s Adopt-a-Minefield Program that works to clear minefields. Paul McCartney has recognized her for her outstanding work on behalf of this project. To date, she has raised over \$200,000 to clear three minefields.

Have you noticed that the people most passionate about making the world better are those that have been hurt the worst? Henri Nouwen refers to them as “wounded healers.” Farah Ahmedi is one.

Coretta Scott King was another. Instead of becoming bitter and retreating after her husband was assassinated in 1968, she championed the cause for civil rights, justice and equality. Four days after Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed, she returned to Memphis to march with the sanitation workers. In an interview that day, she said, “I am impelled to come because of my concern not only for the Negro poor but for the poor all over America and the world.” She never faltered in her attempts to speak for the voiceless, powerless and least among us. She truly was the “First Lady of Civil Rights.”

On the Saturday her body laid in the rotunda at the capitol, I went to pay my respects. I was honored to be one of forty-two thousand that day that filed by her casket expressing gratitude for this “wounded healer.”

Steve Saint is another wounded healer. He was five years old in 1956 when his father, Nate, a Christian missionary working in Ecuador, was killed by a group of

Waodani tribesmen. Nate and his four colleagues were attempting to end the cycle of revenge killings that brought this tribe to the brink of extinction. This moving story is the subject of the movie, "End of the Spear."

Steve has spent his life befriending and helping the people that killed his father. He currently operates the Indigenous People's Technology and Education Center, an organization founded to bring medical technology to primitive people. The Waodani tribe that turned on his father now considers Steve to be one of their dearest friends and looks upon him as a family member.

The newly elected President of Chile, **Michelle Bachelet**, is another wounded healer. She was jailed and tortured during the Pinochet dictatorship, but by the grace of God survived. Recently she said, "Because I was the victim of hatred, I have dedicated my life to reverse that hatred and turn it into understanding, tolerance and love."

It is true that the people most passionate about making the world better are those that have been hurt. The broken hearted heal broken hearts and mend relationships. Wounded healers on every continent are changing our world!

How biblical this is. Grace and hope can emerge from pain, opening the door for healing to occur.

"By his wounds we are healed," Isaiah wrote. Surely this verse influenced Jesus, helping him to understand that as a suffering servant he could change the world. He could respond to hatred with love, violence with goodwill, resentment with encouragement, revenge with forgiveness, injustice with justice, evil with righteousness and despair with hope. In so doing, he could inspire and empower others to end the vicious cycle of retaliation, replacing it with reconciliation.

We can do that, too. Our wounds can be the catalyst for change rather than the cause for retribution. Like our Lord and many that have followed him, we can become wounded healers, making the world safer and better.

Will you be this kind of person? Will you become a wounded healer in your family, on your job, at your school or in your neighborhood? Will you turn something negative that has happened to you into something good for those around you?

Ask for God's help as we observe communion this morning. Look to the one who became a suffering servant and adopt his attitude and lifestyle. I assure you that you will need His help. Becoming a wounded healer is not easy and will require a new way of thinking and responding to adversity.

I am confident that God will help you, though, just as He is helping Farah Ahmedi, Steve Saint, Michelle Bachelet and as He so powerfully worked through Coretta Scott King.