

82. Broken Arrow



An arrow of criticism zings through the conversation, (Jer9:3). It sticks into me and I buckle emotionally, my spirit within, rises up in hostile indignation. Because the arrow was shot by someone who is not hostile and opposing me, it penetrates deeper. Somehow, I manage to avoid a riposte. During the night I turn and twist under the poison of the arrowhead." You, it was you who betrayed me" (Ps 55)

I can fashion a level of forgiveness, but resentment sits over my heart. As if with fever I burn. I distance myself from the perpetrator and wait to witness some form of retribution. Now the wound becomes secondary, on the surface it heals over. There is a semblance of normality. My toxic fantasy life, and tendency to gossip about my grievance, see the poison's impact spread to other parts of my life. I have become defensive.

Jesus, Paul and most of the saints, all suffered unmerited, cutting, criticism on an ongoing basis. More than a mechanical prayer of forgiveness carried them through and forward. Supernatural healing set them free of the full poisonous effects.

They knew that it was a reasonable and seductive temptation to plan a counter strike. There was the insight that we do learn from the classroom of pain. God will continue to chip away at our raw material shaping us into his image, hacking out dimensions of narcissism and egocentricity.

Out of the prickly nettle of criticism Jesus and these saints could pluck a flower:

It is God who defines me
Not my critics
Life is no popularity contest

God never criticizes me

*Before the face of YHWH they could earnestly pray:
I refuse to accept those comments directed at me.
Help me to honour you in my response to this
Empower me to sincerely forgive
Help me to take up an undefended posture again*

References:

12If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him.13But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, 14with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.15Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the grave, for evil finds lodging among them.16But I call to God, and the LORD saves me.17Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.18He ransoms me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me.19God, who is enthroned forever, will hear them and afflict them— Selah —men who never change their ways and have no fear of God.20My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant.21His speech is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords.22Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

Psalm 55

You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
Ps 91:5

For in their talk there is no truth. Their hearts destroy. Their mouths are like an open grave. With their tongues, they say sweet-sounding words that are not true.
Ps 5:9

If a person thinks he is religious, but does not keep his/her tongue from speaking bad things, he is fooling himself. His religion is worth nothing. Jas 1: 25-27

The tongue is a fire. It is full of wrong. It poisons the whole body. The tongue sets our whole lives on fire with a fire that comes from hell. Jas 3:5-7

For “If you want joy in your life and have happy days, keep your tongue from saying bad things and your lips from talking bad about others. 1 Pet 3:9-11

Prayer of St Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

Theodore Roosevelt Sorbonne , Paris, April 23, 1910.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtJel4Q9nBE>

Sinead O Connor singing the prayer of St Francis