

Amongst humanity, there are some common needs, common desires – the need for food, shelter, and clothing, yes, that is basic. There is also the need for meaning, and the need to be important. A fundamental fear is the fear of not being important, the fear of not being counted as needed by others – I can remember my son Michael, age four, standing in our backyard and yelling out to one who at the time was a good friend: "You do too like me!" His heart was broken, because his friend had told him he no longer did like him.

Michael felt betrayed.

It still hurts when I remember myself, when I was twelve, experiencing my Dad leaving the church and more critically, leaving our family.

My Mum having to leave the only life she'd ever wanted.

Myself, my brother and sisters having to re-establish our place in the world, our understanding of what IS, and our relationship with Dad -- none of us, I think, with what we would call great success.

My siblings and my mother felt betrayed, I felt betrayed. Betrayal is a nasty thing.

I know for me, my father's leaving felt like the rug had been pulled out from under me. Even though it actually had very little, if anything, to do with me, even though I was to all intents just 'collateral damage', to my selfish, hurting 12-year-old heart, I was mainly worried about me. I can remember being all alone in the church hall and yelling out "why me?". Why did my Dad have to leave? Why did I have to go through this? I felt totally betrayed. One day, *no matter what happened*, all was well in the world; the next day, *no matter what happened*, all was wrong in the world.

God has also felt betrayal, in spades. In fact, Jesus announced it to His closest friends, to His disciples: "one of you will betray me."

Perhaps you too have felt betrayal at some point. Perhaps your parents separated or divorced. Perhaps your spouse cheated on you. Perhaps they left you. Perhaps you feel a friend betrayed you. I would be surprised if every person, in our fragility, hasn't felt betrayal in some fashion, at some time. Any use of power used by one person over another against their will is in some sense, a betrayal. We can even feel betrayed when the other person hasn't intentionally done anything to betray us!

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Residential Schools legacy, Slavery, Apartheid, Racism, Sexism, Inequality of some form or other: all are voices shouting "I have been betrayed" (or "I am being betrayed") ...

Like Jesus (though perhaps not so poetically), we cry out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest."

We are important! And when we are betrayed, that strikes us to the core, for it says "no, you're *not* important...". Some of us feel our lack of importance so deeply that we literally kill ourselves.

The need to be important, to have influence, to chart our own destiny – it infects nations as well as people. I was listening to a panel discussing the recent actions of Russia. In terms of economic output, Russia is not a super-power – it is actually twelfth in the world, behind, among others, Brazil, Italy, Canada, South Korea, and *just* ahead of Australia and Spain. The panel were discussing why Russia was actively engaged in Syria, and the the number one reason they had was so that it could be seen as important – important to the rest of the world, yes, that it could influence events in critical

areas of the world – and even more crucial, important to its own people, that it was mighty and strong and able to dictate things. We all cry out to be told that we are important.

Today, nations are dropping bombs on each other, and world peace seems as far away as it ever was. We hear about murders and muggings, deaths on a daily basis.

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on Him: Jesus-His-Anointed the iniquity of us all.*

Jesus was betrayed by one of His closest friends. He was abandoned by all of them, and denied by another. He was rejected by people who God had created to be bearers of His Image. He was mocked, beaten, nailed, crucified, speared, killed.

This is not a happy day.

My Dad's purpose in leaving wasn't to hurt us, it was to meet his own needs. The same is true perhaps for everyone: we hurt others in seeking our own needs, our own emotions.

And that is, perhaps, the biggest healing we need: freedom from seeking our own needs, from our selfishness. No matter how good we are, we miss the mark of God's goodness. And in Jesus' death, where we look for hope and for healing in the midst of betrayal, we are promised:

"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

You see, the irony is, that no matter what we do or do not do, no matter, in fact, how the rest of humanity sees us, we are beyond important: we are priceless. We are priceless! God created us as the crowning jewel of His creation, the ones He loves beyond measure: His Image. You are priceless. God seeks you out, even to the point of dying on a cross. God seeks you out, to forgive you down to your inmost heart, and welcome you home.

Jesus died because he insisted on not betraying us, but on serving us. He sought our lives – and so He gave His. As we walk with Him, we find out a crucial truth: the way to life is through death. We are called to allow our selfish desires to die, in order to accept the love of God in their place. Let us crucify *ourselves* alongside Jesus: crucify our need for importance, for influence, for power – let us let it all go. And in the dying of ourselves, let us accept the gift of God: that we are loved, that we are forgiven and cared for, that, paradoxically, in giving up the need for ourselves to assert our importance, we find we are assigned by God an importance beyond belief. May you know this reality: to God, you are important beyond belief. This is not a happy day – but it is a necessary day. It is the day in which God says "You are priceless to me. So priceless, that I willingly die for you." Say this with me: "In God's eyes, I am priceless: So priceless, that Christ willingly died for me."

When we die to ourselves and are filled with the love of God, we find that we are able to forgive – in fact, we need to forgive, those who have betrayed us. Just as God says to us: "I will remember your sins and your lawless deeds no more;" *we also* need to say to those who have betrayed us: "I will remember your sins and your lawless deeds no more."

Even though my Dad wasn't a bad man it took me a long time to forgive him, many years; and though I frankly don't know the effect it had on him, when I finally did forgive him, it had a huge releasing affect on me. I know the power of release forgiveness has not on the forgiven, but on the forgiver -- because I walked that road. When I forgave Dad, it felt as if a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders – I was free of much of that anger and pain (not all, but much). I urge you to receive the love of God, and in that love, with the help of God forgive those who have betrayed you. Forgiveness is so healing – if you need to forgive someone, please do so.

To God, you are important beyond belief. You are priceless. Be filled with the healing love of God. In that love, ask God to help you to forgive those who have hurt you, and let the anger and pain go, to be further filled, in its place, with the love of Christ – the love extended to you from the cross, where He died for you.

God be with you. Amen.