

THE WOUNDED HEALER

Nenri Nouwen, in his book "The Wounded Healer" talks about the loneliness of the minister but it can be applied to all of us as we are all in ministry to one another, each of us leading, healing, praying from our own sense of brokenness.

Beginning with the story of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi asking of Elijah, "When will the Messiah come?" (p 81ff) he takes us through an exploration of loneliness and the cure "hospitality and concentration ... or rather openness to one another and prayer (openness to God) It seems to me that Jesus used the isolation and alienation of the Publican in contrast to the Pharisee's self-righteousness to show that those who are open to the action and activity of the Holy Spirit in their lives are those who are truly working for the coming of the Kingdom, the return of the Messiah. That willingness must however be nourished by a prayer life that is deep and sincere. To come back to the story of Rabbi Joshua we must be ready at the city gates to unbind our wounds one by one always ready to be called to serve even at our time of greatest need, knowing that God is always there to provide for us and to heal us.

This story came to mind yesterday as I sat across the room from a young "twenty-something" minister who had just been terminated after a fifteen month pastorate. Its true, some ministers "shoot themselves in the foot," but it is equally true that there are too many churches ready to circle a wounded healer like sharks in the ocean.

Preachers aren't perfect, they make mistakes. Underneath the suit they are mortal, just like everyone else, just like you. Pray for your pastor, refuse to believe everything someone says about him, and never sacrifice a good man and his family for the sake of the "church". Most churches and pastors can survive disagreements, if given a chance.