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"SICKNESS BY THE POOL"

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PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CIGARETTES? DO WE WANT TO BE HEALED?

THERE IS ALWAYS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION IN BEING RELIEVED OF RESPONSIBILITY. THE INVALID MAY DEVELOP A SUBTLE PSYCHOLOGY THAT TAKES DELIGHT IN BEING FREE FROM BURDENS OTHER MEN HAVE TO BEAR. I WANT TO BE EXCUSED FROM CARRYING THE HEAVY LOADS AND DOING THE HARD LABOR. AS LONG AS I AM WAITING TO BE HEALED, I HAVE A PREEECT REASON FOR BEING EXCUSED. I SHOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT I AM DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PEOPLE. I AM MADE OF FINER STUFF AND CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO DO THE HARD THINGS THAT SOME MEN FIND THEMSELVES OBLIGED TO DO. IF I AM SICK YOU MAY BE SURE THAT NO ONE CAN CRITICIZE ME FOR FOLLOWING AN EASIER PATH.

SOMETIMES WE WANT TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE TOO SPIRITUAL FOR THE HARD THINGS OF LIFE. THER ARE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE WHO TAKE THIS UNCONSCIOUS ATTITUDE EVEN AS SOME TALENTED ARTISTS ASSUME THEY ARE TO BE EXCUSED FROM THE ORDINARY RULES OF COURTESY AND MORALITY. ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS TEMPTATIONS WE FACE IS TO EMBRACE AN ILLNESS AS A WAY TO ESCAPE LIFE. DO WE REALLY WANT TO BE HEALED? HERE IS A FIRST QUESTION WE HAVE TO FACE, AND UNTIL WE ARE HONEST IN ANSWERING IT, NOBODY CAN DO VERY MUCH FOR US. WE NEED A VISION OF HOW GREAT LIFE IS WHEN IT IS LIVED WITH FULL ACCEPTANCE OF ITS SORROWS AS WELL AS ITS JOYS, ITS RESPONSIBILITY AS WELL AS ITS PRIVILEGE

WHEN D.H. LAWRENCE DIED IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE IN 1930, THERE WAS TALK OF BUILDING A MEMORIAL TO HIM IN HIS HOMETOWN OF EASTWOOD, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, ENCLAND. THE WOWN COUNCIL EVEN SET ASIDE LAND FOR A CIVIC CENTER TO BEAR THE FAMOUS WRITER'S NAME. DURING ALL THESE YEARS NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE, AND NEWSPAPER REPORTER VISITED THE TOWN SOME TIME AGO TO ASK WHY DIFFERENT PEOPLE MADE DIFFERENT EXCUSES. UNTIL FINALLY HE FOUND A LOCAL MAN WHO SIMPLY SAID TO HIM, "LAWRENCE NEVER LIKED THIS TOWN VERY MUCH AND WE NEVER LIKED HIM." IN A BRIEF MOMENT ALL THE EXCUSES AND ALIBIS WERE BLOWN AWAY AND STARK TRUTH STOOD OUT. THERE WAS NO MEMORIAL BECAUSE NO ONE WANTED TO BUILD ONE. WE HAD BETTER INQUIRE INTO OUR SITUATION AND ASK OURSELVES IF THE REASON WE ARE NOT HEALED IS BECAUSE WE REALLY PREFER OUR SICKNESS.

THE STORY COMES TO ITS HAPPY ENDING BECAUSE OF THE HEALING--

NOT ALL OF THE N.T. STORIES END HAPPILY, BUT THIS ONE DID.

When at LAST JESUS BROKE THROUGH THE PRETENSE OF THE MAN'S MIND AND HELPED HIM SEE WHAT HE WANTED AND NEEDED, HE WAS HEALED.

JESUS SAID TO HIM IN EFFECT THAT HE MUST MAKE AN EFFORT TO STAND UP AND STOP WAITING FOR AN ANGEL. I HAVE SEEN THAT SCENE IN MY IMAGINATION MANY TIMES, AND I HAVE OBSERVED IT ACTUALLY IN MY OWN MINISTRY. SUDDENLY A MAN BELIEVES THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN GIVE HIM WHAT HE NEEDS AND HE ACCEPTS IT AND HE STAND UP.

OFTENTIMES THE HARDEST THING IN LIFE IS MAKING THE START. HOW LONG WE CAN POSTPONE THE DECISION AND THE ACTION! WE ARE GOING TO BREAK A HABIT, BUT NOT UNTIL TOMORROW. WE ARE GOING TO START OUR BOOK, BUT NOT UNTIL A MORE CONVENIENT SEASON. WE ARE GOING TO LIFT OURSELVES TO HIGHER LEVEL, BUT NOT NOW. THEN THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE MIRACLE OCCURS AND HE SAYS TO US, "STAND UP." GETTING STARTED IS THE HARDEST PART, AND IF WE CAN TAKE HIM AT HIS WORD AND SIMPLY BELIEVE THAT NOW IS THE MOMENT, WE ARE HEALED. THE GREAT SURPRISE THAT COMES IS THE REALIZATION THAT JOY IS HIS GIFT TO THOSE WHO CARRY THEIR SHARE OF THE LOAD. C.S. LEWIS WROTE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY WHICH HE ENTITLED SURPRISED BY JOY. IT IS A FINE INSIGHT THAT TO TAKE JESUS AT HIS WORD IS TO FIND OURSELVES SURPRISED BY HIS JOY.

ACCORDING TO OUR FAITH SHALL IT BE DONE UNTO US. ACCORDING TO OUR FAITH SHALL WE FIND POWER. WHAT A GREAT THING IT IS TO KNOW THAT THE GREAT PHYSICIAN IS AVAILABLE TO EACH ONE OF US NOW AS HE WAS TO THAT MAN BY THE POOL.

THERE WAS A MISSIONARY IN INDIA WHO ASKED A HINDU SCHOLAR TO TEACH HIM THE LANGUAGE. THE MAN REFUSED. THE MISSIONARY SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT THE SERVICE WITHOUT COST AND THAT HE WOULD PAY THE FEE EXPECTED. BUT THE HINDU STILL REFUSED, SAYING THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN. THE MISSIONARY PROMISED TO MAKE NO EFFORT TO CONVERT HIM. ALL HE WANTED WAS TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE. THEN THE HINDU SCHOLAR REPLIED "NO MAN COULD BE WITH YOU VERY LONG WITHOUT BECOMING A CHRISTIAN." THIS IS THE WAY IT OUGHT TO BE AND SO SELDOM IS. BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT NO MAN CAN WALK WITH JESUS OR ACCEPT HIS WAY WITHOUT BEING MADE WELL. HE WILL DESTROY OUR ILLUSIONS, BUT HE WILL GIVE US HEALTH. AND THAT, MY DEAR BREATHREN, IS GOOD NEWS INDEED.