

Our scripture today comes from the last chapter of Job. Yes, we're going to return there once more. This passage comes after Job has seen God and found some sort of peace with God, the Unknowable One; creator of the universe. Now we turn to the human relationships that have been damaged and need repair - the relationship between Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, and God and the relationship between these 3 men and Job.

Remember, that this comes after what may have been a long period of time together - that initial week of sitting in silence and then words spoken by each of the men and God. This was not a time of warp speed vaccines. No, here,

The work of forgiveness, the transformational power of forgiveness, takes time.

Hold that spaciousness of time as we listen to what the scriptures have to say:

Job 42: 7-10

After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: 'My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has done.' So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends;

Look at the different characters -

Friends need to do the work. Humbly accept the task and their role in the fracture of relationships - with God and with Job

Job - he prays for his friends. What did that require of Job? What did he need to release in order to pray to God that Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar would again be in right relationship not only with himself, but with God?

'And the Lord accepted Job's prayer, and the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends.'

In this act of prayer for his friends Job finds new life and restoration with God and these 3 broken men.

Today we return to Desmond and Mpho Tutu's Book of Forgiving and their fourfold path. 2 weeks ago, we looked at the first 3 steps - telling the story, naming the hurt and seeing ourselves in the other - seeing our shared humanity.

Tutu names the fourth step as renewing or releasing the relationship.

As we consider this final step of renewing or releasing, I want to Pause and hold the messy relationships of our lives, recognizing that we can only control our part. Our hearts may long for more, and yet the reality might hold silence and brokenness.

PAUSE

In recent weeks I've been blessed, yes blessed, to hold threads, to hold scraps of relationships with some of you. It's holy work that I am so grateful for.

Relationships are messy, sometimes we only have threads left from what once felt like beautiful quilts.

**My friends - This work cannot be done without prayer.**

We must prayerfully "Trust in the slow work of God"

The process of forgiving is transformational - it changes one thing into something else. Maybe it's our own inner transformation, maybe it involves others, but always, the relationship is different than before.

**Over and over the connecting threads between us get damaged and must be repaired.** Once we live into the reality that we are all broken, all capable of harm, not really that different than one another, the final step is to either renew or release the relationship you have with the one who has harmed you.

There may be times when releasing is the necessary choice, where the relationship ends. Sometimes there is no patching together and finding a way forward together - as much as we may long for that.

But if possible, renewal allows the threads that were damaged to be sewn together into something new.

We have that story of Job finding renewal in relationship with his friends, I offer another story of renewal...

A few weeks ago, Bethany told me about some forgiveness work that happened in their family circle. Ben, Daniel, Timo as well as Karen and Jae's children, Lena, Arie and Lomi spent the spring and summer helping to care for the family goat herd.

Earlier this spring the goats had several babies - goat kids that is. We met the one - Bertha - in a children's story back a few months ago. The human kids cared for those goat kids with such love and affection - taking delight in each other. Honey was one that captured their hearts in a special way- she was beloved.

Well as fall is beginning to set in, Bethany realized they had too many goats in their little goat shed, and needed to sell some of the flock. A buyer named Heidi came that week, planning on buying two of the kids, but after a brief conversation and negotiation with Heidi and the children, she left with 3 of the goats. Lydia, Bertha... and Honey. The children were clear, they did NOT want to sell Honey, but the reality of farm life prevailed, and off she went, heading to a new home.

There were many tears that night, and Bethany realized that perhaps she was too quick in making that decision, and hadn't included the children in ways she wished she had.

Jae suggested a Lamentation Circle with the children - a ritual where they told the story, named the hurt and remembered. They used a talking stick, lit some candles, and talked about each of the goats, saving Honey for the end. After a time of prayerful silence together, Bethany apologized to the children for how she handled the decision making process. Little 3 year old Lena, with her intense, big, brown eyes, looked at Bethany and said "I did not want to sell Honey", making her dissatisfaction clear.

This all happened just a week before Karen, Jae and their children were to head back to Korea, and Bethany was concerned that this is how the girls would remember her, so she made an effort to take much more time to connect with them, to talk with them, and look them in their eyes. As they said their final goodbyes, Lena gave Bethany a big hug, welcoming her back into her circle.

This story has an ending that offers a sense of renewal - a making of something new, fragile yet strong.

Not all of our journeys toward forgiveness offer this path of renewal.

As you hold stories in need of forgiveness, ask yourself: **What do you need in order to renew or release a relationship?**

This work comes from the heart, not the head.  
We cannot control this process for others

Our work is to offer the relationship to God, to open our hands, hand it to God; release it to God. You may find you've picked up the scraps of anger and pain - and need to open your hands and release it to God, again and again and again.

End by introducing: “mercy now” by Mary **Gauthier** (pronounced go-shay)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IT7NiFpJmvl>)

This song is a prayer for mercy; mercy for the people and things she loves.

This mercy she sings about involves holding the beauty and the brokenness.

We all need mercy. On our journeys of forgiveness, we all need to hold our pain, our stories, and release them to God, praying for mercy.

forgiveness and restoration required the friends to accept their role and to take actions to repair their relationship with God and with Job. Job accepted his friends' sacrifices, he was part of the ritual of forgiveness God outlined and he PRAYED FOR THEM. He chose to work towards renewal... Scripture says: "And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10) Somehow a new beginning for Job was interwoven with the restoration of relationship with his 3 friends.

- lamentation circle (did it involve prayer?)

Two weeks ago we looked at the first 3 steps of Desmond and Mpho Tutu's Fourfold Path of Forgiving

Those 3 steps are

Telling the story

Naming the hurt

Granting forgiveness - which means we recognize our shared humanity.

As Job prayed for his friends as they brought their sacrifices to God before him - he saw that they shared the same flaws and brokenness.

In offering that prayer, God 'restored his fortunes'. Job was truly free.

The fourth step of Tutu's path of forgiving is:

Renewing or releasing the relationship

Renewing relationships allows curses to become blessings and continue to grow through our forgiving  
*UBUNTU says "I am incomplete without you".*

I HAVE A PART - each of us has a role in the society we have created. We can take responsibility for our part in a way that frees us from being a victim and allows us to open our hearts.

Compassion enables us to recognize the unique story of the other.

P 157 Always remembering: we are all in a relationship with one another. When a relationship breaks, we have the responsibility to roll up our sleeves and get to the hard work of repair. Renew relationships when you can, release when you can't.

Practicing the last step of 4 fold path keeps anger, resentment, despair from having the last word.

5. ??? END with Buddhist teaching - I forgive you; please forgive me. Can be spoken aloud. Can be said silently. What would it be like to make this a daily practice with those we love, those we work with? It may involve the other (if we're in close relationship), it may mean an offering we make to them (like a coworker or family member, someone who slights us during our day). PRACTICE.

The word "quilt" comes from the Latin "culcita," meaning stuffed sack or cushion. Quilting refers to the stitching holding together three layers: a pieced or appliqued cover, filling and backing. The earliest evidence of quilting is a circa-3400 B.C. carved ivory figure in the British Museum of an Egyptian pharaoh wearing what looks like a quilted mantle.

<https://www.nps.gov/home/planyourvisit/quilt-discovery-experience.htm> Good stories of using bits and pieces... keeping women sane and a way to artistically show their faith

The Hebrew, for 'the Lord restored the fortunes of Job' actually translates as: "The LORD turned the captivity of Job"

That is a very remarkable expression--"captivity." It does not say, "God turned his poverty," though Job lost everything he owned.

We do not read that the Lord turned his sickness, though he was covered with sore boils. Instead, the Lord turned his captivity; the Lord *transformed* his captivity.

Captivity is bondage.

It was through his praying for his fellow humans - those capable of doubt, fear, misunderstanding, just as he, Job, was. Job prayed for Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar - three men not unlike himself. Job's suffering allowed him to see the suffering of his companions, and to pray for them. It's then that Job's captivity truly ended, he was set free.

3. Jesus' prayer on the cross - Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Jesus is not offering forgiveness, he asks God to forgive them.

(Luke 23:34)

Use this story to talk about the painful work of getting to the last step of forgiveness. Painful for everyone involved.

They had a lamentation circle -

The story was told

The feelings named

Bethany named how she was sorry for what happened, holding both the needs of the farm and the grief of the children. She asked for forgiveness, recognizing that the process felt unfair to the children.

They talked some more - little Lena, at 3 years old, with daggers in her eyes, looked at her aunt, Bethany, and claimed the pain she was experiencing.

What was outcome? Was prayer involved (either outwardly or inwardly?)

Did your relationship feel affected/damaged as they left for Korea?

What did you learn about this process of forgiveness?

To Ben and Daniel - what was it like to talk about selling Honey in that circle time?

How are you feeling now about Honey having a new home?

Ben said, "I didn't approve of selling Honey".

The original plan did not involve the sale of Honey. Honey was "Now that it's done, it's done." Ben said. "It's a new good home"

Ubuntu - South African word that means 'humanity' - belief that a person is only a person through other people. We are human only in relation to other humans. Our humanity is bound up in one another, and any tear in the fabric of connection between us must be repaired for us all to be made whole. Interconnectedness is the very root of who we are.

Children's time to be about quilt - ubuntu? We're all stitched together. How to mend a torn quilt? The patch can be beautiful - shows how we make something new out of brokenness.

Need to go through rituals of grief for forgiveness to happen.

Rituals needed for all trauma and loss (betrayal, infidelity, violence). Rituals help us heal and become ready to consider the story of the other. This helps us rewrite the story for ourselves.

We must choose forgiveness again and again and cultivate it as a quality of our character.

From conversation with Allan Boesak – minister, theologian, former politician – is a patriarch of the modern anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

<https://reflections.yale.edu/article/future-race/spirit-ubuntu-interview-allan-boesak>



In your country you've talked about the importance of Ubuntu, the idea of human interconnection, affirmation, openness to others. Can that be a practical guide for reform?

**BOESAK:** When the aim of society is to be non-racial, then the question of race is subsumed under the question of our common humanity. We've had help with our thinking from the concept of Ubuntu. The concept has been abused, sentimentalized, and romanticized by many and almost disempowered. But in essence, if I really believe that my humanity suffers when your humanity is undermined, and I cannot be fully myself unless I make sure you can be fully yourself, and the recognition of your humanity actually enhances my own – so that I embrace you, embrace the other, and therefore the otherness of the other person doesn't matter and has no impact on me – then Ubuntu is a wonderful, powerful concept. It says the humanity of the other is what binds us together. Now, too often we claim Ubuntu without really meaning it. I ask that we not underestimate its immense value or trivialize what is unique about it. Ubuntu allows us to move away from the power of ethnicity that was part of racist apartheid thinking.

**REFLECTIONS:** Can Ubuntu be translated in Christian terms?

**BOESAK:** Ubuntu is not a biblical concept but an ancient African one. Nevertheless it falls back on one simple thing: that humans have been created for togetherness, and what drives us apart is greed, lust for power, and a sense of exclusion, but those are aberrations. What always strikes me in the story of Cain and Abel is how often the word "brother" is used. Cain killed his "brother." God says it was "the blood of your brother." The killing was done to another human being, a child of God like you, breaking that sacred bond of common humanity. Ubuntu understands that, and that seems to me also a biblical idea. Then Jesus comes and reaffirms our humanity by taking it upon himself and identifying moreover with the poorest of the poor, the set aside, the least of these. These are the ones who exemplify my humanity in the world.

[https://www.academia.edu/11756886/The\\_Kingdom\\_of\\_God\\_and\\_the\\_Ubuntu\\_Ethic](https://www.academia.edu/11756886/The_Kingdom_of_God_and_the_Ubuntu_Ethic)