

When Someone is Too Bruised to be Touched

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A few days ago, I was asked to visit a family who had, just that day, lost their 19 year-old son to suicide.

There isn't much one can offer by way of consolation, even faith consolation, at a moment like this, when everyone is in shock and the pain is so raw. Few things can so devastate us as the suicide of a loved one, especially of one's own child.

There is the horrific shock of losing a loved one so suddenly which, just of itself, can bring us to our knees; but, with suicide, there are other soul-wrenching feelings too, confusion, guilt, second-guessing, religious anxiety.

Where did we fail this person?
What might we still have done?
What should we have noticed?
What is this person's state with God?

What needs to be said about all of this:

First of all, that suicide is a disease and the most misunderstood of all sicknesses. It takes a person out of life against his or her will, the emotional equivalent of cancer, a stroke, or a heart attack.

Second, we, those left behind, need not spend undue energy second-guessing as to how we might have failed that person, what we should have noticed, and what we might still have done to prevent the suicide.

Suicide is an illness and, as with any sickness, we can love someone and still not be able to save that person from death.

God loved this person too and, like us, could not, this side of eternity, do anything either.

Finally, we shouldn't worry too much about how God meets this person on the other side. God's love, unlike ours, can go through locked doors and touch what will not allow itself to be touched by us.

Is this making light of suicide? Hardly.

Anyone who has ever dealt with either the victim of a suicide before his or her death or with those grieving that death afterwards knows that it is impossible to make light of it.

There is no hell and there is no pain like the one suicide inflicts. Nobody who is healthy wants to die and nobody who is healthy wants to burden his or her loved ones with this kind of pain.

And that's the point: This is only done when someone isn't healthy.

The fact that medication can often prevent suicide should tell us something. Suicide is an illness not a sin.

Nobody just calmly decides to commit suicide and burden his or her loved ones with that death any more than anyone calmly decides to die of cancer and cause pain.

The victim of suicide (in all but rare cases) is a trapped person, caught up in a fiery, private chaos that has its roots both in his or her emotions and in his or her bio-chemistry.

Suicide is a desperate attempt to end unendurable pain, akin to one throwing oneself through a window because one's clothing is on fire.

Many of us have known victims of suicide and we know too that in almost every case that person was not full of ego, pride, haughtiness, and the desire to hurt someone.

Generally it's the opposite.

The victim has cancerous problems precisely because he or she is wounded, raw, and too-bruised to have the necessary resiliency needed to deal with life.

Those of us who have lost loved ones to suicide know that the problem is not one of strength but of weakness, the person is too-bruised to be touched.

I remember a comment I over-heard at a funeral for a suicide victim.

The priest had preached badly, hinting that this suicide was somehow the man's own fault and that suicide was always the ultimate act of despair.

At the reception afterwards a neighbour of the victim expressed his displeasure at the priest's homily: "There are a lot of people in this world who should kill themselves," he lamented bitterly, "but those kind never do!"

This man is the last person who should have killed himself because he was one of the most sensitive people I've ever met!"

A book could be written on that statement. Too often it is precisely the meek who seem to lose the battle, at least in this world.

Finally, I submit that we shouldn't worry too much about how God meets our loved ones who have fallen victim to suicide. God, as Jesus assures us, has a special affection for those of us who are too-bruised and wounded to be touched.

Jesus assures us too that God's love can go through locked doors and into broken places and free up what's paralyzed and help that which can no longer help itself.

God is not blocked when we are. God can reach through.

And so our loved ones who have fallen victim to suicide are now inside of God's

embrace, enjoying a freedom they could never quite enjoy here and being healed through a touch that they could never quite accept from us.

Love and peace,

Karyl, Mother of arlyn

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POS and FFOS

Arlyn's Memorial website -

<http://virtual-memorials.com/servlet...=7461&pageno=1>