

Stones! Stones! Stones!

Lord, We have lots of stones in our lives. We have stones that build walls and stones that cause us pain. We have expensive stones; old stones, small stones, big stones. We have stones we wear and stones that wear us out. We have stones that we use to stone others with and they stone us just like they did Jesus. We have stones we use to climb and stones we trip over. We have stones that make paths and stones that defy our endurance.

But Lord, there is one kind of stone that sometimes protects us and other times hinders our growth. Lord, let's talk about the kind of stones that protect us. These are the stone we use to wall ourselves in; to protect us from hurt, especially if we have been hurt before. We wall people out, even family and friends, when we have been hurt. We don't want anyone to throw any more stones at us. It is too painful. We like the security the wall provides. We build as high as we can and as strong as we can so that no more painful and poisonous bullets can penetrate our fragile self-image.

Yes, Lord, we build walls to protect and to separate. We all know the old saying that says, "Good fences make good neighbors." In other words, just like a cat or dog marks its territory, making sure no other dog or cat tries to claim it; we too set up boundary walls. They keep everyone in their place on the right side of the fence. We hang out that invisible sign that says, "Thou shalt not trespass."

It seems, all through history, so many wars have been fought over boundaries. We get greedy. We never have enough. We want more space, more power to control, not only our own destiny but the destiny of others. We flex our military muscle when we feel threatened. We use the armor of our military might to speak for us. We hide behind the newest, the greatest and the deadliest

Isn't it ironic, Lord, that our cemeteries are filled with headstones; stones placed over heads and hearts that are dead. Even those of us still living carry around in our heads and hearts our own headstone. We may be existing but are not really free to live.

Yes, Lord, there are lots of stones lying around; stones that are waiting to be moved. There are stones that break relationships; stones that cut off communication, stones of stubbornness that hinders reconciliation; stones that harden hearts and magnify fears. We all know such stones and have used them.

When the women came to Jesus' tomb early that Easter morning, they wondered who would move the stone that covered his grave's entrance. They came with their stony hearts and dashed hope. They didn't expect anything. They just came to anoint a dead body and hopefully, move on with their shattered dreams, slow to trust again.

Like the women that Easter morning, we also come to the tomb. This time, it is our own tomb. The large stone is there to seal us in, away from any more broken promises and heavy hearts. It is so easy to get so used to the inside of our dark, personally made tomb. Even though the darkness of the tomb is scary, it is also reassuring. We like being in our own protected cocoon.

Like the women, surprised by a rolled away stone and an empty tomb, we also discover that someone has rolled away the stone in our lives and given us a new lease on life. No longer do we have to think of hurt, rejection, pain. Instead, we can think about new beginnings, new hope, new life. No longer do we have to think about our own walled up cocoon. Now we are transformed like the butterfly and can fly.

Easter is an empty tomb that no stone, no matter how small or large, can conceal. The power of Easter is crushed stones and joyful hearts. The power of Easter is walls that crumble and healing hearts. The power of Easter is a Risen Lord that no stone can contain. All is well that ends well because it really is a new beginning, a new joy, a new hope, a new eternity.