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To Give Yourself

What does it mean to give yourself? What response do those words evoke within you? And to whom are you willing to give yourself?

We might think of a father giving his daughter away. Our daughter is getting married in August, and we will “give” her away.

But truly she will have to give herself to her husband.

We also give ourselves in friendship. We give ourselves in so many relationships. We give our hearts to God.

We speak of being whole-hearted in our devotion. Of giving ourselves completely. Yet sometimes I find that I resist the whole-hearted giving of myself. Doesn't it feel safer to keep a few corners of your heart in a place no one can have. Perhaps we've all learned the art of self-preservation.

To preserve means to protect, but it also indicates that something is kept away from harm oftentimes by covering or shielding an item. When we practice self-preservation, we have effectively kept our hearts from being touched. We have shielded ourselves from exposure – to harm and to love. We have actually harmed ourselves in order to keep someone else from harming us.

How many people cover their wounds in alcohol or drugs or sex or by shopping or eating saying “Stay away. Don't get too close. You might hurt me or I might hurt you.” And we go through life living in a sort of immunized way. We experienced enough hurt to tell our bodies to manufacture immunity to deep feelings.

Maybe we package Christianity so neatly that no one wants to buy in. It is so sanitized that the radically lost, hurting people instinctively know something is off-kilter. And away they go looking for love “in all the wrong places”.

When we get our hands and hearts “dirty” by becoming deeply involved in the lives of others, we risk a whole lot of hurt – and gain a whole lot of love.

Isn't that the picture of Jesus on the cross – His hands dripping blood. His body covered with our dirt. His heart aching until it burst? Because of love.

I think of how he looked over Jerusalem and his heart was ripped out because he longed for them to receive his love “and they would not”.

Yes, love is risky. Love is painful. Love costs us everything. And it fulfills all the commandments of Christ. In our deaths, we live. It doesn't look like pretty red Valentine candy or lacy cards. It looks like Jesus. Giving Himself.

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