

We were not strangers. For many years I had been her spastor, confirming her daughters, perfoming the marriage for one of them. I knew four generations of her family, we had made the slow journey to the cemetary where wh commended to the care of God one who was dear to her. But even so, I was in no way ready for what she shared that day.

You did not know my grandpa, she began. He was well-known throughout the area, widely respected. I was very young, seven or eight. Grandpa ruled over the whole family. He began to sexually abuse me. Once, twice, many times. My mother knew. My grandmother knew. They did nothing. They sax said nothing. even to this day they will not speak to me about it, or let me speak. It is best a secret in their eyes. Best that nobody ^{else} know.

Max was

I x k e m e n k e r x a m e t h e x g i r l x x l a n x u x x e a r s x u s u n g e r x x x i x h a d x c o n f i r m e d x h e r x x b u r i e d
h e r x f a t h e r x x p a r t i c i p a t e d x h e r x w e d d i n g x x b a p t i z e d x h e r x c h i l d x x x x h e r t i x x a f t e r x i n e x
w a d d i n g x h e r x b e s t x f r i e n d x c a m e x t o x m e x w i t h x t h e s e x w o r d s x x x j i m x i x c h e a t i n g x a n x h e r,
x i d i n g x a r o u n d x t o w n x d r i n k i n g x w i t h x o t h e r x w o m e n x x x

She is not just one, she is ten, a hundred women I have known. She is ashamed at how he treats her, she ashes inside at how he treats the children, still she is silent. and x t r i e s x h a r d e r x x If people knew it would only be worse. So she prays. And tries harder. Maybe there is something she can do to change him. Manage the money, fix meals that he likes, be understanding, bear the cross. She knows he's a good man, she knows how wonderful he could be. Somehow she knows she could change him if she just does a little more. Maybe then he'll stop drinking.

Honor your Father and your Mother, I teach. When I get to the kingdom of God I will find out how many times I spoke these words to a child who was being beaten by his father, her mother. In these cases sax so often there is a secret to be kept, shame and trying to cover up. As I teach the command I make it that much harder for the defenseless child, for in his mind God is

now on the side of the abusers.

With all of this on my mind and my heart, the sexually abused child, the women who live with the shame and pain of alcoholism, children beaten by their parents, aware of all of these I open to our second lesson this morning. The passage begins, Servants (and the real word there is slaves) be submissive to your masters with all respect, not ~~to~~ only to the kind and gentle but also to the overbearing. One is approved if mindful of God he endures pain while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it ^{you} ~~and~~ take it patiently you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

Christians are called to following Christ. We are called to accepting unjust suffering, to ~~forging~~ forgiving those who strike us first on one cheek and then the other.

Of Jesus we read: He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled he did not revile in return; when he suffered he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly.

We are called to following Christ in this. ^{Jesus said,} If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. This morning we heard the account of Stephen. Even as he was being stoned to death he cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

But today among us there are millions of Christians who suffer behind the closed doors of their homes. How many times I have said, today in America people don't really suffer for their faith, having in my mind governments and persecution and torture. But in those homes heaped in shame and silence and secrets, how very many ^{live} believing that God wants them to obey an abusing parent, ^{elope} ~~forgive~~ ~~forgive~~ the behavior of the drinker that makes their home a hell, how very many are suffering this very day in faith. ^{fly out} Suffering, not at the hands of evil strangers, but suffering unjustly at the hands of the very people God

has provided to care for them, protect them, yes, love them. ~~and~~ if you are one of those people who are suffering in your home, or who has suffered in silence or shame, you may hear these words ~~from~~ about being like Christ, and think that God wants that sort of suffering to continue for you. Let me assure you, he does not.

If someone is abusing you, has abused you, ask yourself, can I talk about it? Can I bring it out of the darkness and into the light? If the answer to that question is no I cannot, then God's word to you this morning is not, "Bear the cross, but rather, Speak to someone about what has happened, what is happening. God's children are not called by him to being bound by secrets and silence and shame, but are called to the light, and to the truth, and to freedom. Our whole lives are to be exposed to the light that is Christ.

But if you are not in a situation of secrets and shame, then my word and God's word to you is bear the cross, following the example of our Lord. Every day people are stepping on your toes, kicking you in the shins, angering you. Forgive, let go of your rights, follow the example of our Lord who when he was reviled did not revile in return, when he suffered did not threaten, but trusted to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.