

LOVE HURTS

Jean and I spend a few minutes each evening during the Advent season often thinking about the theme of the week. This week the theme was LOVE. We began thinking about some people and life situations that are not good. I'm sure everyone can make a list. I realized that we were sort of sad and depressed. I said, "*Love hurts.*"

That seemed to nail it right on. One of the risks of love and caring is that sometimes it hurts.

Anyway, Paul and Mary and Jean and I drove to Eugene this past Wednesday. We were going to visit our friends, Terry and Marlene. We have almost a half century of history together in different situations. Marlene is recovering from serious surgery. As we got together in Marlene's room I looked at the six of us. There were three marriages of more than 50 years and counting.

Terry had a chair near her bed. He spends hours there every day. I thought of the hurt of seeing someone you love hurting. I thought again of "Love hurts." Yes, it's part of the package.

I thought of marriage vows we had all taken and all the weddings where I had asked couples to repeat the wedding vows. I always wondered if they had a clue what it meant to love and to cherish, "*for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health.*" Did they understand the "worse" and "poorer" and "sickness" side of love?

I brushed those thoughts away and passed around programs from one of our past Christmas Eve services at the Old World Deli and Pub. The programs were the same year after year. 30 minutes from beginning to end.

Paul got us singing the carols. I thought we might sing a few carols. After a carol or two we came to familiar parts of the service. Like where Jean would read the Christmas story. That's where the lights went low..."mother Mary" and "baby Jesus" would slowly enter... while we all sang of "*...the hopes and fears of all the years....*"

So the six of us sang and I could see the action in my mind. I recalled my impromptu calling forth shepherds and angels and kings from the crowd, then everyone singing "Away in a Manger"... We sang together yesterday at our bedside "manger"... "*I love Thee Lord Jesus, look down from the sky, And stay by my cradle 'til morning is nigh.*" The song sheet turned to the candle-lighting part.

I confessed my annual anxiety remembering all those kids lighting candles in the dark. We sang as we used to while light was spreading in the room... "*Silent night, holy night, darkness flies, all is light, Shepherds hear the angels sing...*"

I never preached. Never took an offering. But I usually had a little blessing like the one I used yesterday. "*As the glow of our candles surround us with light, so may the love we know as God surround us all in love.*"

Candles were out by then. We traditionally ended Moment events with "Let there be peace on earth" and so we sang yesterday as we have many times over the years..."*To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.*"

Paul led us to our last song — "Joy to the World." And so we sang yesterday, ending with the love theme, the theme for this last week of Advent..."*...and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, and wonders of his love.*"

We had no idea of having a Christmas Eve service in that small room. We were drawn together by love and by hurt that only comes with soulful care. Every place can be a manger for the presence of love.

For the Moment...Art Morgan, Advent Four, 2016