

We've been telling stories of reconciliation...

1. Jacob and Esau—then James Nayler and George Fox
These stories are stories of local reconciliation—of reconciliation between peers
Reconciliation begins here—locally—between those of us in the community
The absence of reconciliation robs the church of unity
2. Joseph and his brothers—then Nelson Mandela and the truth and reconciliation commission
Both stories are stories of victims who rose above their victimization
People who ultimately gained power
Having the power to destroy, they extended grace and forgiveness
Forgiveness and reconciliation begin with telling the truth
First, tell the truth, then see what God will do
3. Jesus—Palestinian and Jewish mothers who lost sons—Ireland YM—THARS women in Burundi
These were stories where people enacted the ministry of doing reconciliation work
Either overtly or passively
People saw the humanity in the other and recognized their value
Together they worked to reach others who needed reconciliation

This week we were again stunned by senseless killing, this time at a Mosque in New Zealand
Gunman shot and killed 50 people, plus many were injured
How do we respond in the face of such violence?
But what about when it happens to us?
Is there way forward when we are deeply wounded?

Scripture tells us to forgive...

When Peter asked how many times we must forgive—7 times?
Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. Matthew 18:22 NRSV
"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.
Forgive, and you will be forgiven." Luke 6:37 NRSV
Even as Jesus was crucified, he said,
"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34 NRSV

I'm drawn this morning to two stories of people who forgave, but didn't simply forgive...
—they also became wounded healers

The first story is of David Niyonzima from Burundi—many of us have met him and others know of him
From the book, *"Unlocking Horns"* by David Niyonzima and Lon Fendall, Barclay Press, 2001
David was a pastor in Burundi and teaching at the Kwibuka Pastoral Training Center
Both Hutu and Tutsi were enrolled in this school—and in David's class
It was a nice day and they were sitting outside talking during a break
Suddenly about 20 armed soldiers and civilians appeared—all Tutsi looking to kill Hutus
As they began shooting, David and the students scattered—all terrified
David ran to a locked building where they used to train people to become auto mechanics
He unlocked and entered the building, then hid in the pit where people worked on cars
While hiding, he could hear the gunfire as the soldiers looked for victims
He was scared and could barely pray, "God protect me"
The soldiers knocked down the door and came in, but saw no one and only looked briefly
The footsteps and gunfire faded away, but knowing they could return, he stayed in place
He stayed there all day and night

In the morning, desperate to know what happened to the students, he left in mechanics overalls
Not knowing where it would be safe to hide, he ultimately decided to go to his parents
Relieved to see him but without talking, his father sent him to hide in the attic
He realized he had put his parents at risk, and he could be found in the attic
He relived an earlier genocide event, remembering the deaths of loved ones
He waited in agony until he heard voices—his wife Felicity and son had come, and they were fine
While David's family were spared, many others were dead
Felicity said that the soldiers were Tutsis and had come to find Hutus to kill
Some of the students that died were Tutsi, as was Felicity, but David was Hutu
Felicity returned home, feeling safe as a Tutsi
David stayed in the attic, since he was a well-known Hutu—the target of the soldiers
The days dragged on, with no way of knowing if they were still in danger
The days turned into a week, when David heard a voice very clearly...
"David, if you were meant to die, you would have been killed on the day when the students were massacred. No bullets came your way. What are you doing here?"
The voice was followed by a "video replay" of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 19
The prophets of Baal hadn't been able to call down fire to consume the sacrifice
After adding water, God answered Elijah's prayer and sent fire from heaven
Elijah ordered the prophets of Baal killed and the Queen said he would also die
Elijah fled and hid in despair—but angels asked, *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*
David realized God was telling him to leave his hiding place
Returning to the school, they found and buried 25 bodies
But a new depression came over him as he cried out, "why?"
God directed David to come to terms with the killing and seek out those who were responsible
He thought it outrageous that he should talk to the perpetrators of the killing
He knew what the Bible said—but did it apply to such blatant evil as this?
Did Jesus really intend for us to obey this teaching literally?
David realized that God was asking him to actually forgive his enemies as Jesus had taught
While arguing with himself about whether he could do this, he was in town and saw Filbert
One of the men who had led the group to Kwibuka
David found himself shaking his hand and to his surprise, these words came from his mouth
"By God's power, I forgive you for your part in bringing the soldiers to kill our students at Kwibuka."
Filbert denied it, but David simply said... *"I'm not here to argue with you, Filbert. I'm telling you. I know you were one of those in the group. But I'm not accusing you either. I'm forgiving you. Jesus has asked me to forgive those who have wronged me, and by His power I'm doing exactly that."*
Filbert was overwhelmed and speechless, although he could not bring himself to confess
David felt a heavy load lifted and a new sense of peace and freedom
How could he not forgive someone who was freely being offered God's grace and forgiveness?
Having begun to forgive, David was able to speak with renewed boldness
He wrote this book, not for Americans, but for Burundi—to call them to reconciliation
He began THARS—Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services of Burundi
With the intention of bringing healing to both Hutu and Tutsi, as well as Twa
Small listening groups where they can tell their stories
Works with the community to reconnect and reconcile
Uses many tools to help with healing—including quilt making as trauma healing
We have partnered with THARS through Peace through Pieces

The second story takes place in South Africa and is the story of Ginn Fourie and Letlapa Mphahlele

After he was angered at the killing of 5 black school children, Letlapa ordered an attack on whites

Lyndi, the daughter of Ginn was one of those who was killed

Not only did they finally meet and Ginn extend forgiveness

But they created the Lyndi Fourie Foundation, which travels internationally

Teaching forgiveness through story telling

A documentary has been created telling their story—*"Beyond Forgiving"*

I'm going to play the trailer for that documentary this morning

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/beyondforgiving>

Following the video, we will go into open worship

I leave you with a question that Ginn asks in the documentary...

"How does one move from victimhood to survivor and then to wounded healer?"