



GPS: Grow, Pray, Study Guide 2.08.15

"Fix Me, Jesus": O Lord, Fix Me

based on the Negro Spiritual "Fix Me, Jesus"

The Rev. Larry D. Pickens, Scripture Focus: Genesis 45:1-15, 50:15-21

Fix Me, Jesus

Oh, fix me, oh, fix me, oh, fix me; fix me, Jesus, fix me.

Fix me for my long white robe, fix me, Jesus, fix me.

Fix me for my starry crown, fix me, Jesus, fix me.

Fix me for my journey home, fix me, Jesus, fix me.

Fix me for my dying bed, fix me, Jesus, fix me.

O Lord, Fix Me

"Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

This is the background to the texts that describe Joseph's exile to Egypt. Joseph's brothers, out of jealousy, conspire to kill him and place him into a pit. But as they were about to kill him, they saw a caravan and decided that instead of killing Joseph, they would sell him into slavery.

The caravan was on its way to Egypt, and Joseph's brothers thought that they would never see him again. But as fate would have it, you never know when you are going to see someone again and when you might need him.

I remember going to serve a congregation in Northbrook, Illinois, and I discovered that my college Spanish teacher was a member of that congregation. I told him that had I known that I was going to see him again in life, I would have done better in Spanish.

Joseph's brothers knew what they had done to him, how they had wronged him; but Joseph did not seek revenge or retribution. God fixed him, enabling him to take the violence against him and turn it into victory.

People violate or wrong us for various reasons. It can be for power that we are violated, or jealousy, as is the case with Joseph. Brothers were jealous of Joseph because he had a gift that they did not have. People might violate us because of lust, because they want something or someone that we have; it makes them feel good for the moment. You can be minding your own business, and someone may decide that they want what you have, and they conspire to take it.

Today I am talking about forgiving people when they have wronged you. Carrying around angst, anger and anxiety is a corrosive force that wears away at us when we allow it to hang around. It is important to let go, give up that toxicity because it can be hazardous to your health. When someone does something to you that hurts you, the longer that you hold on to it, the more it feels like heavy baggage that you are carrying.

Let Jesus fix you today.

Some of you have some animus toward someone because he or she did you wrong. I am not asking you to forget. In fact, you need to know as much as you can about what happened to you, so that you don't repeat mistakes. But I am asking you to forgive.

I borrow from the South African context in order to look at this issue of forgiveness. Specifically, I refer to the context of *ubuntu*. Ubuntu speaks of the essence of being human. It means that my humanity is caught, is inextricably bound up, in your humanity. Dr. King called this a network of mutuality. It implies that I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. We belong in a bundle of life. A person is a person through other persons.

A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, and does not feel threatened that others are able and good. He or she has proper self assurance that comes from knowing that she belongs to a greater whole, and that her humanity is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or when others are treated as if they are less than who they are.

To forgive is not just to be altruistic; it is actually the best form of self-interest. What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me. But as the song says, God's fixing spirit gives people resilience. It enables them to survive and emerge still human, despite all efforts to dehumanize them. When we forgive someone who has wounded us, it serves to humanize both of us.

Ubuntu is a form of justice known as restorative justice. Restorative justice is not based on retribution or punishment. Restorative justice or *ubuntu* is concerned with healing the breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships. It is an effort to rehabilitate the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offense. Restorative justice is taking place when efforts are being made to work for healing, for forgiving and for reconciliation.

Some of us have seen breaches in our relationships. Ubuntu is about restoring broken relationships. It means creating a new future that is based upon mutual respect and affirmation. Ubuntu is about fixing what sin has broken.

Forgiveness comes in response to some failure. All of us are sinners and fall short of the glory of God. Therefore, we will all fail on some level. The question that must be answered is what do in the face of our failure. When God dealt with Adam about the forbidden fruit, Adam was not willing to accept responsibility for his actions, but tried to shift the blame to Eve. When God confronted Eve, she pointed back at Adam. Both Adam and Eve had a problem owning up to the sin that they committed in the Garden.

I know how hard it is to forgive people when they will not even admit that they have done something wrong to you. It makes it worse, as though they are not only trying to play you, but they are telling you that they think that you are stupid. I have been there, where folks have done things to me that were so obvious that it was inconceivable to me when the action was denied or glossed over.

But you know what else I discovered? We get to choose what we are going to focus upon.

We can choose to focus on what has happened to us in the past, or we can focus on where we are headed.

Forrest Gump was right when he quoted his mama, saying, "You've got to leave the past behind before you can move on."

In my life I have had people try to tie me up, make me think that I am inferior, and talk about me. But I have decided that it is better to let go of that and focus upon what I want to achieve in life.

In the movie *Long Walk to Freedom*, there is a scene where Nelson Mandela is talking to some young activists who were impatient about how the democratic process was developing and how they could not forgive the white Afrikaners. He told the young people that after everything that happened to him, he had forgiven the white Afrikaner, and so should they.

The things that you focus upon become the primary direction of your life. We can focus upon how others have wronged us, or we can place our gaze upon what it is that God is calling us to do and be.

I don't know about you, but as for me and my house, we will praise the Lord! We will lift up the name of Jesus for his mercies are great!

And you know what else? When you are too tired to fight the battles, Jesus will fight them for you. When you are broken, Jesus will fix you.

Let God fix you.

Give up the toxic feelings of hatred toward others. Give up the idea that you are inferior to another human being. Give up the notion that you don't have anything to offer. Give up the notion that the bad things that have happened to you define who you are.

We also need to learn how to forgive ourselves. God is still on the throne. I am reminded of correspondence between Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglas. Douglas was pessimistic about the future of black people and whether slaves would ever be set free. Harriet Tubman wrote Frederick Douglas and asked this question: "Frederick, is God dead?"

In your most pessimistic moments, that question is still pertinent: "Is God dead?"

- Oh but I'm catching it on the job, the politics are too much... "Is God dead?"
- I have been betrayed, I don't know if I can trust another man, another woman again: "Is God dead?"
- A man named Mandela was placed in prison for 27 years, lost his marriage and family life. World leaders ridiculed him. But in his prison cell, Mandela had to ask himself the question: "Is God dead?"

The answer to the question is that God is *not* dead. God lives, God lives. "Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me, He talks with me. I serve a risen Savior!" ([He Lives](#) © 1933 Alfred Henry Ackley)

So give it all up!

Give up your attitudes of superiority. Give up your attitudes of inferiority. Give up your pain and disappointment. Give up your attitudes. Give it up. Free your mind, free your spirit, free your soul, and the rest will follow.

There was a teacher who was discussing with his class the attributes of Jesus. After everyone had spoken, a little child shouted out...."They nailed him to a cross and Jesus could take it."

But Jesus did not take the cross in a stoic sense. What Jesus did was take what was supposed to be defeat and turned it into the victory of the cross. That is why Joseph could say what was meant for ill, God has used it for good. I guess you could say, God fixed it!