

The Crossroads

The people came to a crossroads.

The road to the left looked much as the one behind them, a dark, deep forest of dead and rotting trees. The once smooth pavement was cracked and uneven, dotted with muddy potholes.

The road to the right was paved with cobblestone. It was walled tall with stone and shrouded in a fog so dense the tops of the walls could not be seen.

The way forward was bordered by trees. It was bright and clear, but more of a path than a road, unpaved and showing no evidence of having been walked on for a very long time.

The people argued over which way to take. "The way forward is beautiful but what good could be at the end if no one has been walking that way?" some said.

Others said, "The way to the left looks like the road behind us. We know what to expect if we go that way."

Still others said, "I heard very good things about the right. They say it is good for us. They promised if we go that way we will have all the things we want and more!" Though no one knew who "They" were.

The people debated for hours before the ones who wanted to go right grabbed the others, one in each hand and dragged them down the foggy road.

As they walked they could see that the walls that had looked so strong were cracked and pitted. The tops of the walls crumbled behind them, trapping them on the road to the right.

The people approached a mound of stones that filled and blocked the road. The first to arrive managed to climb it with help from others. With each person who scrambled over the rubble, the stones became more dislodged and eventually too loose to climb.

The few who made it over the mound shouted to the others, "It's much nicer on this side. It is clean and bright and food enough for everyone. Come over! It's not difficult!" The few did not realize that in their carelessness climbing over the mound they had made it nearly impossible for others to follow.

In time it began to rain. The crowd at the base of the mound grew angry. They argued and blamed one another for being wet. They split themselves into groups. The children of Abraham raged against one another. The Buddhists removed themselves from the argument. The Hindus were never allowed in. The Atheists wanted to reason through the problem. The Agnostics didn't know why there needed to be an argument at all. Those who lived by the laws of the earth, having known the way forward was the path to take, looked sadly behind them at the road now filled with debris.

The people continued to further divide themselves, by language, by color, by status, by who they love, and by who they were told to hate.

The rain turned into a storm. There were people who began to fight violently. Some were pushed to the ground and injured, some were killed. Some grew evil in their desire for what good things they felt they were promised. Those people gathered the bodies of the injured, the dead, and the dying to shore up the mound in an attempt to make it easier to climb. Not feeling they had enough for their purpose, they began harming others to make their ladder of bodies. All around them the puddles of rain turned red.

Many wanted to escape this road of destruction that they found themselves on. They began discussing how to return to the crossroads.

The people considered retracing their steps. Many people would be needed to clear the road for passage and some said it would be too hard. Some said they didn't want to go back to the crossroads because the mound may someday come down. They could not even find a place to move the debris to. So retreating down the road was forgotten.

They discussed breaking through the wall to forge a new way to the crossroads. The wall was so big it would take everyone working together to do it, and they would not work together. Some said they were afraid they would get hurt trying. Some said that they still wanted to see if they might get over the mound. Some said they didn't want the people that they hate to get their freedom too. So breaking through the wall was forgotten.

There was a small group of people who began to realize that this would never work. They were also wet and cold and they were tired of waiting for everyone to agree. They quietly slipped away from the larger group.

Before long a hammering could be heard in the distance.

After time had passed, the small group returned to the others and called, "Listen! We have made space to dry ourselves and there is room for all!" The people looked at one another. They did not want to share space with those they had grown to hate and fear, but they did want to be dry.

The people who had given up on the mound followed the small group and came upon a wondrous sight. The group had used debris from the road to build a pavilion. It stood strong and welcoming despite the blocked road behind it. And the builders were right. They did feel better as they dried. And as they dried they looked around at the others in the pavilion. They were no longer sure who it was they were supposed to hate.

One of the builders stood on a table and spoke to the crowd. "If we work together we can build anew from the destruction of this road, and find our way back to the crossroads. This time we will take the forward path. Come, let's make a plan."

And so they did.