

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

The cards that stole my heart as an eight-year-old broke my heart as an adult. Lord, may it stay broken.

Thursday my friend Madeleine and I met my mama and sister for lunch at the lake. It was grand. We sat out on the dock and drank hot cider. It felt like we were on some grand ocean liner, with the wind blowing and we were wrapped up on the deck. The good news was that we had already reached our desired destination - the lake.

It was only a short visit, but we still had time enough to soak up the tranquil beauty. I believe I could sit on that dock for all eternity - just sit and watch nature do its dance. The ever-changing clouds and water and sun and moon and stars. Oh, it's grand and balancing. All is well, always, after a stay on the dock. It doesn't matter what season or time of day - the result is always the same - deep peace.

We then came in and shared a delicious lunch. Mama told me she'd brought a little surprise for me. While cleaning out drawers, she had come across an old scrapbook of mine and brought it to me. It was brown leather and had "Scrapbook" written in gold. It looked vaguely familiar. I knew it had been mine and I assumed it had to have been of high school vintage, for that was the memento age, as I recalled.

I opened the yellowed pages up and much to my surprise and delight, the treasures of an eight-year-old unfolded before my eyes. It had valentines scotch-taped to the pages and a telegram from my favorite teacher, Miss Robinson, and a letter from my grandfather's seventy-year-old cousin, who I knew had loved me. Each little memento seemed to blow silent kisses to me from the past.

And then I came to two cards, one sent from Los Angeles and one sent from New York City. It was those two postcards of old that broke my heart. They were both addressed to "Darling Lucy" and one of them said, "Don't forget your Uncle Chris." And that was the statement that started the "heart crack" - for you see, I had.

I had forgotten, or at least had forgotten the Uncle Chris as seen by an innocent eight-year-old. Grand memories began to flood back into my mind. I remembered when Uncle Chris would come home, it was like a celebrity had arrived. We children would put on plays for him. Everything seemed a little enchanted. He never stayed long, always brought gifts, and played the piano and told about his exotic travels and told about the latest play or song that he'd written. At eight, I thought him a handsome adventurer. As an adult, I viewed him more as a lost soul.

The thing that hit home so hard was the innocence lost, my innocence. At some point along the way, my eight-year-old innocent, accepting and yes, loving eyes had been replaced by

jaded, judging ones. And with judgment, came hardness of heart. The older I got and the more mature I became (whatever that means), I began to glean from my own observations, plus others, that Uncle Chris wasn't so glamorous after all. None of his plays and songs were ever hits. None of the jobs he held were for very long. He died at age 59. Tragic, I used to think. What a waste, I used to think. What missed opportunities, I used to think.

But then this week, I saw the postcards and with those postcards come the pain and the realization that I'd become an accomplished judge, using my standards, not Jesus'. Lord, forgive. I realized that there were a whole lot of "Uncle Chris" in my life - those just not quite living up to my standards. Lord, forgive. The real tragedy, I realized, was that innocent, accepting love had given way to a limited, conditional, judging love. Lord, forgive.

I saw the postcards and a crack was felt in my heart. I hope and pray that the crack continues until my heart is totally broken so that innocence once more can reappear. Innocence is defined as "uncorrupted by evil, malice, or wrong-dong; sinless; untainted; pure."

Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for such is the kingdom of heaven." I believe it was the innocence and acceptance and love that our Lord was pointing out to those people gathered, those mature, got-it-together people, so "gotten together" that they were jaded and hard-hearted and

crackless. Notice, I didn't say flawless, but crackless and hard-hearted.

But how can we remain innocent as children all through our lives? Is that possible? I believe only at places like Father Purcell's Exceptional Center; maybe that's why it is called exceptional. These children are extremely handicapped, both mentally and physically. Somehow this reality seems to have placed them into an innocence time capsule. It is a place of love and acceptance and celebration of the little things - a smile, a wave, or a sound becomes a monumental moment. To feel the softness of a sixteen-year-old's hand that has never been polluted by the hardships of life is to hold a dove in your hand. To look into eyes of total innocence is to get a glimpse of the heavenly. That's why I feel most comfortable playing with the children on my knees. The awe - generated by innocence - is awesome.

But for us who are out in the real world, the polluted world, the "sin full" world, how do we keep that innocence that our Lord Jesus Christ delighted in? How do we keep our hearts pliable and growing with the love of Jesus, as opposed to hard-hearted and shrinking from sin?

I believe it is only by His grace and by keeping our eyes continually on Him. I believe it is only by His grace and by being in constant prayer and supplication. I believe it is only by His grace and by remembering always what our almighty God did for each one of us, remembering that the Lord

incarnate came down and hung on a cross, so that each one of us might be in a personal relationship with Him. Wow! Isn't that awesome and humbling? Doesn't that just crack and break pride and self-righteous judgment and hearts?

Joel 2:13a says, "Rend your heart, and not your garments and turn unto the Lord your God."

The Psalmist says, "The Lord is nigh (near) unto them that are of a broken heart..." Psalm 34:18. And, "The sacrifices of God are broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51:17.

And in Luke, the first time that Jesus claimed His Messiahship, it says, "He found the place where it was written 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captive, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord!' And he closed the book and he gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.'" Luke 4:18-21.

I bet when Jesus finished talking, you didn't hear a pin drop, but hearts cracking and breaking. And thanks be to God, His Word continues to crack us and carrying our tailor-made crosses continues to crack us - and receiving a card once more from Uncle Chris - well, you know what it did - crack!

Thank you, Lord! Break us and make us into Your image!

*I am your broken and breaking
sister in Christ,*

Lucy