

Living With Insecurity

Monday I had an accident. I was helping Alice move a few things and I didn't notice a step and I fell forward. I stumbled, pitched forward and crashed into a concrete wall. I would have hit it head first but I quickly turned at the last minute and smashed into it with my right shoulder and fell to the ground.

It was more pain than I've felt in decades. I laid still for a while and then tried to move my arm to see whether I broke my shoulder. Fortunately, I didn't. Though it was my shoulder that I hit, all the pain was in my back. Any move increased the pain but finally Alice helped me to my feet. I'm stilling hurting even as I type these words. I didn't go to see a doctor –I know, I know- but I'm pretty sure I just pulled some muscles pretty badly. I'm confident I'll be fine in a week or so.

I'm thankful the accident wasn't worse. I could have hit my head and ended up with brain injury or even died. I hit hard. Or I could have broken my shoulder. Given the shoulder injuries I've already had, that would probably led to a shoulder replacement surgery and some unwanted changed in lifestyle.

I'm not telling you this to solicit your sympathy. Rather, I'm sharing it to note how things can change so quickly. No matter what you are doing or where you are or who you are or how careful you are, life is uncertain. Bad things happen and they don't occur to punish us or because we are jinxed in some fashion. We are all vulnerable simply because we are human and the world is not perfect.

The author of Ecclesiastes tells us, "The wise have eyes in their head, but fools walk in darkness. Yet I perceived that the same fate befalls all of them. Then I said to myself, 'What happens to the fool will happen to me also; why then have I been so very wise?' And I said to myself that this also is vanity'" (2:14-15). Accidents, illness and the evil people do can suddenly intrude into our lives and forever alter our future. No amount of caution or preparation can keep us secure.

Yet we want so much to have security. That is why the insurance industry is so pervasive. There is health insurance, life insurance, car insurance, malpractice insurance, even insurance for insurance companies. Yet in this world insecurity remains. Trying to maximize our security can end up causing us to undercut the joy and richness of our lives.

Jesus didn't call us to live safe and secure lives. He called us to follow him in ways of faithful service. He called us to practice love, even when receiving no love in return. He called us take the risks that discipleship requires. "Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it" (Luke 17:33), our Lord taught. In this world insecurity and uncertainty are at every turn. In the face of this fact we need not despair but hear the words of the Psalmist, "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:8).