

Everyone has a story of pain and brokenness. As we keep this in mind we will be more compassionate and loving.



*12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:12-14*

## "Let Him Dance"

I remember Bear, one of our rather large middle-aged homeless friends, who joined us on occasion at the Lighthouse. He sported a brownish bushy beard that fit his largish frame. His hair was wild and unkempt but he was usually jovial with a mischievous twinkle in his eye...and he often smelled of alcohol.

On this occasion several years ago, he came down the stairs with a friend right before our service started at the Mayflower. He was friendly as usual but just a little more loudish than I was comfortable with because of the alcohol. He sat on the right side of the room. He wasn't causing any trouble, but I was a little unsettled thinking of what he might do. I nervously watched him so that I could provide help if he was overly disruptive for the service.

I was very grateful for the opening worship portion of the service that would provide a louder background volume as Jess and the team started with the music. I watched Bear as he was in an animated conversation with his friend that was now thankfully drowned out by the music.

I then watched as Bear stood up.

What was he going to do now?

Did I need to head over to him to try to provide a redirection?

Then he stepped out from his seat and he began to slowly dance in a lumberjack out-of-rhythm sort of way. He was laughing and slowly doing circles as he ambled around. I initially thought "O no! - he's got to be distracting others from worshipping...or worse."

But as I continued watching him I had a slow thawing in my mind as I processed what was happening: "he isn't hurting anyone; and he's actually entering in in his own way." Then I had an emphatic divine thought that came blasting through my mind: "Let him dance!!" .....So I did - I watched as Bear haphazardly slow-stomped and danced to the first couple songs.

Then as if he had suddenly remembered something he had to do, he decided it

was time to leave....so he turned around, walked to the entrance, gave Raymond a big hug, and headed up the stairs.

A short time after this, I heard that Bear had tragically died. In the time of processing Bear's passing with a few of his homeless friends, one of his friends shared about Bear's backstory. As a young boy on their family farm, Bear had gone with his younger brother out to burn some trash and tragically Bear's younger brother had caught fire and burned to death.

I was shocked and speechless. I wished I had known his story before he had died. I would have been less inconvenienced and irritated that Bear was so slow to change. I would have been kinder...more patient...more compassionate...more loving.

Bear's story marked me and has stayed with me to this day. Everyone has a story that contributes to the way they are. If I remember this, then I am kinder to the "Bears" that I presently interact with.

One thing that I am forever grateful for is that on that Sabbath day....I let Bear dance.

Tomorrow Theri will share her powerful story of how she came to Yeshua. When she told her story in our house church a few weeks ago, I thought again of this Bear story. I hope many of you are able to join us for the time.