

One of the characteristics of many Eastern cultures is a deep sensitive to OTHER PEOPLE AND THEIR FEELINGS. For example, one publication, the Financial Times, carried this rejection notice, written to a writer by the overly polite editor of a Chinese economic journal:

"We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper," says the editor, "it would be impossible for us to publish any work of lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that in the next thousand years we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition, and to beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity."

It would be nice if all rejection letters were so tactful, wouldn't it? **Actually, most people experience rejection as something cruel, sometimes heart-breaking.**

There was a story in the newspapers sometime back about an 11-year-old boy in Los Angeles who hanged himself with a bathrobe belt because his girlfriend broke up with him in an E-Mail message. The boy left no suicide note, but told the 12-year-old girl in an E-Mail that she *"wasn't going to hear from him anymore."* She sent back a message asking, *"Do you mean suicide?"* but he did not respond. The boy's father found his son hanging from a shower frame. The children met at a summer camp about a month before.

Eleven years old. You and I would dismiss it as puppy love, but still there is pain. **Actually, rejection is particularly hard on us when we are young.** This is when we are still forming opinions about our own self-worth. Are we acceptable, lovable, worthy of our place in the sun? **YES, REJECTION LEADS TO LIFE ENDING TRAJEDY!!**

After the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado where 13 were killed and 20 were wounded, there was much speculation about what motivated the two young men. Why did they gun down their classmates? The final outcome of this disaster was that they both were being BULLIED AND HAD FEELINGS OF REJECTION. They felt left out, and in their own twisted and pathetic way, took their revenge.

Jules Verne was 35 years old in 1863 and still unknown when he wrote a satire on the future called PARIS IN THE 20TH CENTURY. He sent it off to the leading publisher of the day. The publisher was unimpressed. "Petty journalism," the rejection letter called it. So, the disappointed writer buried the letter in an old trunk and went on to other things. Eventually, novels like AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS and 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA made Jules Verne famous. The book about Paris was forgotten until recently, when a great-grandson cleaning out the family house in Toulon found the yellowed manuscript. French experts authenticated it, and the book was finally published recently, more than a century late the literary event of the year in France.

Verne's book, by the way, is amazing stuff. Verne projected 100 years ahead. In his Paris of 1960, people have private cars, "gaz cabs" he called them, of 20 to 30 horsepower a prediction Verne offered a quarter century before the advent of the automobile. He also forecast the telephone, fax and computer. He foresaw a world in which classical culture gave way to a bleak society dominated by finance and industrial technology. Art treasures of the Louvre gathered dust while people flocked instead to "electric concerts." Jules Verne was one of the world's great visionaries, **BUT HE STILL KNEW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE "REJECTED."**

AND YES, SO DID JESUS. Here, of course, is where we have been leading. JESUS KNEW WHAT IT IS TO BE REJECTED. Listen to our text for today. Jesus said to them, *"Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?"* (Vs. 42, NRSV)

That's what our text for the day says, and we know that it is true: *"The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."* Jesus was quoting Psalm 118: 22-23. He was applying it to his own life. People in his own community dismissed his preaching. People

of his own faith labeled him a blasphemer. **And the eventual price for his rejection was the cross.** The perfect Lamb of God rejected by his own people. The gentle carpenter from Nazareth crucified between two thieves.

SOME OF YOU KNOW WELL WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE REJECTED! You have been rejected by someone you loved. You have been rejected in school or in the workplace. Some of you bear scars that no one else can see--scars of disappointment and pain.

Surprisingly, some of you have happy marriages, good families, and still you feel rejected. You don't even know why you feel this way. After all, no one you love has turned their back on you. But still, unspoken feelings of rejection haunt you.

YOU SEE, THE WAY WE HANDLE REJECTION AS YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS IS DETERMINED BY WHETHER WE ALREADY FEEL REJECTED OR ACCEPTED.

Some young people can be left out of a group and it barely fazes them. Why? They already feel loved and accepted. They don't need to be affirmed by their peers. At the same time there are adults who go all to pieces when they are rejected. Perhaps it's when a spouse walks out on them. The ordeal is so crushing that they never move beyond the pain. Others pick up the pieces and get on with their lives. What is the difference? Usually it's because the latter group already feels loved. They do not depend on a particular relationship to define their worth as individuals.

THE FEELING OF "ACCEPTANCE" IS SOMETHING THAT WE LEARN/HAPPENS IN THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF OUR LIFE. Some of us had parents who knew how to love unconditionally and without restraint, and so they instilled within us feelings of acceptance and security--feelings that will stay with us all our lives.

But others of us had well-meaning parents who did not know how to give such unrestrained love--perhaps because they never experienced such love themselves. And so many of us go through life looking for the acceptance we never got as children. And it is a crippling experience.

BUT THERE IS HOPE. Where? In the same place Jesus found his hope. Listen again to these words from Psalm 118: *"The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING, and it is marvelous in our eyes."* Jesus who was rejected became the CHRIST WHO REIGNS.

And, says the Scripture, **THIS WAS GOD'S DOING.** This is where hope is found for all who carry around feelings of rejection, inadequacy and inferiority. It is found in the unconditional love of God. It is found in laying our self-doubts and fears on the altar of God and asking for healing for our wounded lives.

One of the most respected and best-liked persons in Hollywood is Kathie Lee Gifford. Like everyone, Kathie Lee has had her share of heartaches--particularly in her marriage, as the tabloids have pointed out to us repeatedly over the last few years. And after all of that was resolved, she then lost her husband to a terrible heart attack.

In 2022 she was honored as Mother of the Year. The Gifford's children, Cody and Cassidy where there to support Mom. They ALL took to the Podium and she said, *"I get an award for this?"* asked Kathie Lee, standing with the kids. after her introduction by New York first lady, Kathie Gifford said, *"I am so blessed!"* Then Kathie Lee thanked her parents, who were present. And here is what Kathie Lee Gifford said about her parents. It explains why Kathie Lee's life has been such a success: *They "taught me,"* she said, *that God loved me totally, unconditionally, and that he had a purpose for my life."*

No wonder Kathie Lee is successful not only in her career, but as a mother. She knows she is loved. *They "taught me," she said, "that God loved me totally, unconditionally, and that he had a purpose for my life."* No one who knows the unconditional love of God in their heart will allow the world to make them feel rejected for long. When we have the love of God in our hearts, we carry a sense of security that the world cannot take away. And that sense of unconditional love is available to all who will receive it. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same one has become the head of the corner: THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING, and it is marvelous in our eyes." **ACCEPT THE LORD'S LOVE AND YOU WILL BEABLE TO OVER COME ALL "REJECTION!!** Amen.