

DON'T BLAME ME, IT'S NOT MY FAULT

Pastor John Hicks

First United Methodist Church

It seems no one takes responsibility for anything anymore. I read about a man who was suing a hospital. A doctor had performed staple surgery on his stomach to help him lose weight. A couple of days after his operation, he raided the hospital refrigerator and stuffed himself with everything he could find. This tore open the staples and forced another surgery. He was suing the hospital for having a refrigerator near his room. He claimed the temptation was too great. Thus, his complications were not his own fault but the hospital's fault! A little girl was sent to her room for misbehaving. Sometime later her mother happened to pass by her door and heard her praying. "God, I am stuck up here because of you, you know. Last night I prayed for you to help me be a good girl. Well, you didn't, so it's your fault!"

Sounds a bit like the conversation between God and Adam and Eve in the Garden. Adam responds by admitting that he ate the forbidden fruit, but it wasn't his fault. "The woman You put here gave me the fruit".

Immediately, Eve said, "I'm not responsible, the Devil made me do it!"

All of us as Adam and Eve's descendants have refined victimization to a fine art. Since the beginning of time our first instinct has been to blame others for our own failures. No one in government takes responsibility for anything anymore. We foster, we obfuscate, we rationalize. Instead of accepting responsibility, we claim we are victims of cruel and callous forces. Being victimized allows us to be blameless.

When something bad happens, it can't be our fault. It must be someone else's. – it's always someone else's fault. I remember a "Peanuts" strip in which Marcia telephones Charlie Brown: "Guess what, Chuck...the first day of school, and I got sent to the principal's office. It was your fault, Chuck." "My fault?" Charlie Brown replies surprised. "How could it be MY fault? Why do you always say everything is my fault!" "You're my friend, aren't you, Chuck? You should have been a better influence on me!"

A psychologist visited a prison in connection with his doctoral dissertation and asked the question, "Why are you here?" The answers were very revealing: "I was framed;" "They ganged up on me;" "It was a case of mistaken identity;" "It was not me--it was somebody else." The psychologist concluded that you could not find a larger group of innocent victims anywhere else in the world than in prison!

Then there is the ultimate: the guilty victim. Some years ago an Albuquerque, New Mexico prisoner filed a lawsuit against his accusers for the trauma caused him by the whole ordeal. The man, sentenced to 34 years in prison for multiple counts of child molesting, claimed that he had been humiliated, had suffered health problems, and had been deprived of employment opportunities because of his criminal conviction. He was seeking \$2-million in damages from those he molested. We live in a society which allows such claims to go to court.

No wonder people ignore the gospel. Victimization convinces men and women to look for a scapegoat instead of a Savior. After all, if I am not to blame for what I do, the cross on which Jesus died is much ado about nothing. Victims do not need prayer or God, just a sympathetic therapist or a good lawyer.

But the message of our faith states that the blame game doesn't have to rule. When we surrender the authority over our lives to God, when we finally admit that God is God, and we are not, we open ourselves up to a tidal wave of divine compassion and love and the peace that passes understanding. Recognizing that God is the Absolute of all absolutes minimizes the blame game. Pleasing God, serving God and obeying God become an expression of God's strength, Christ's love and the witness of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

