

A tall, burly man entered a San Francisco liquor store sometime back, pointed a revolver at a clerk and demanded money. According to police, when the clerk refused to comply, "the suspect then began to cry," put his gun in his pocket, and ran out of the store. Imagine that. A grown man, rejected by the man he intends to rob, breaks down in tears. **I do believe that would-be robber is vocationally impaired.** He doesn't belong in the criminal profession.

Maybe he broke down in tears because he was tired of being REJECTED. **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN REJECTED?** For an award? For a job? In romance? **It hurts. It hurts a lot.**

Some unpublished letters went on sale recently in London. They were written years ago by Winston Churchill to an heiress. **The letters reveal that one of the century's great statesmen knew what it was to be rejected.**

The former British prime minister had proposed marriage to Muriel Wilson, the daughter of a wealthy shipping tycoon. Soon after Wilson rejected him, Churchill sent a handwritten letter asking to see her again. "Don't slam the door," Churchill, then 30, begged Wilson, a year younger. "I can wait perhaps I shall improve with waiting," he wrote. "Why shouldn't you care about me someday?" Pleading in a postscript, Churchill added, "Send me one line back." Later he wrote her again. "Of course you do not love me," he wrote. At the same time he insisted they search for a key. Why? Because if there was a key, it which would unlock both our hearts.

The man who would one day provide a strong voice for the aspirations of the British people was once REJECTED just like many of us may have been rejected. **FEW THINGS HURT AS MUCH AS "REJECTION."**

Some of you will recognize the name Tempestt Bledsoe. Tempestt was eight years old and in grammar school in Chicago. She had a huge crush on a boy in school. During the school year, he was going out with the prettiest girl in class. But on the last day of school, they broke up, and he came to Tempestt to confide his troubles.

Little Tempestt tried comforting him by telling him what a great guy he was and how he'd find someone extra special real soon. Then she swallowed her pride and asked him the question she'd been wanting to ask all year would he go with her? At that moment, this young man didn't answer. But when they were back in class, he wrote her a note. The note had a strange message. It said, "Yes, as long as nobody NOT ICES." Not ices? Tempestt said that for the longest time she couldn't understand what NOT ICES meant. She sat there staring at that note for 45 minutes until she realized his meaning "Yes, as long as nobody notices." She was crushed and started to cry.

This was a turning point for Tempestt Bledsoe. She determined to become more self-confident and to ignore the taunts and teasing from her peers. And as some of you know, the story has a happy ending. The following year, she left for Hollywood; she had landed a TV role on THE COSBY SHOW. After the show's first season, she went back for 6th grade graduation, and everyone lined up to get her autograph, including **the boy who turned her down WHO REJECTED HER!**

I wish life always offered happy endings, don't you? Unfortunately, it doesn't. **Rejection comes into our lives, and it hurts.**

You might be interested to know that the phrase ***"To turn him down"*** meaning to refuse a proposal of marriage originated in America in Colonial days. When a bashful suitor wanted to find out, without asking, if the woman he was courting would marry him, he would place a "courting mirror," face upward, on a table in front of his sweetheart, after first looking into it himself and presumably leaving his own likeness in it. If the young woman cared to accept him, she would pick up the mirror and smile at his likeness which she was supposed to see there. But if she did not want him, she simply turned the mirror down and with it, his face.

Have you ever been "turned down"? Most of us have at some time in our lives. Sometimes rejection comes to us in romance. Sometimes rejection comes from other significant people in our lives.

Elizabeth Barrett married the poet Robert Browning against her parents' wishes. In fact, they objected so strenuously to her marriage that they disowned her. As everyone knows, her marriage was a beautiful, happy relationship for both Elizabeth and Robert. In spite of the hurt of being rejected by her family, however, Elizabeth Barrett Browning continued to write regularly to them. In each letter, she told her father and mother how much she continued to love them. She received no response. Then, after total silence for ten years from her parents, a large package arrived. Elizabeth Barrett Browning eagerly opened it. The box contained all of the letters that she had written them since her marriage to Robert. **Not one had been opened.**

Parents can be vindictive at times as can children. And the pain that can result is devastating. Rejected is there a more painful word? Especially the rejection of divorce. Some divorced people will testify that losing someone you love to divorce is even more painful than losing them to death because of the additional hurt of rejection. Sometimes children feel rejected when a parent walks out. They don't know it's their parents' problem and not their own. All they know is that a very important part of their world has been torn away. Rejection what a terrible, terrible word.

Some people are rejected in their careers. With the down-sizing that is going on in many large corporations, many people in our society are feeling rejected where it hurts in the pocketbook. If you are in that growing group, you are not alone.

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, "gas 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 still he knew what it was to be rejected.**

AND 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'?"*

"The stone that was rejected..." **WHAT STONE IS THAT? JESUS IS TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF. YES, JESUS WAS REJECTED.** Say that with me: **JESUS WAS REJECTED.** It's important. The next time you are turned down for a promotion the next time somebody higher up in the pecking order snubs you the next time you have a spat with someone you love and they walk away leaving you feeling cold and alone, think of these words, **Jesus was rejected.** We worship a triumphant Lord. **Yes, but before he was triumphant, he was rejected.**

Sometimes in the loneliness and hurt of a time of rejection, we imagine that we are the only ones who have been hurt that way, but we're not. **It is a common experience.** Everyone who has ever walked this earth has been rejected at some time in his or her life. **AND THAT INCLUDES JESUS. That is what the cross is all about.** Before it was on our altar it was on his back. We cherish the cross as the symbol of our salvation but

before it was the symbol of salvation, **it was the symbol of rejection, it was the symbol of pain, and it was the symbol of failure.** Jesus knew what it was to be rejected.

Recently, a West German theologian, Dr. Hanz Schwarz, attended a conference at which he met a Hindu from New Delhi, India. The Hindu told the conference that a few years before he had visited Rome and seen, at St. Peter's, the world famous Pieta by Michelangelo. He conceded that the sculpture of the dead Jesus held in the arms of the mourning Mary was an artistic masterpiece. Yet somehow, this deceased Jesus remained alien to him, as did the many crosses with the suffering Jesus on them that he saw in Rome. A Buddha, he said, would never have been depicted like that. **Buddha died as if he were slipping away into a better beyond, with a smile on his lips and his face relieved that his suffering was over.** A suffering Jesus, the Hindu confessed, simply contradicted his idea of a **REDEEMER**. Dr. Schwarz said: "The figure of Buddha is typical for the way salvation is depicted in most other religions. Savior figures usually do not identify . . . with the suffering and death of this world. **INSTEAD** they want to draw their **BELIEVERS** away from this world and its **SUFFERINGS** and **ATTRACT** them to a better beyond."

Unlike other would-be saviors, Jesus was rejected. But, of course, that's not the end of the story. Jesus was also triumphant.

Let's return to our text. Jesus quotes to them from the Hebrew Bible: *"The stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone; THIS WAS THE LORD'S DOING, and it is amazing in our eyes."*

HERE IS OUR HOPE. The stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone but, the writer adds, **THIS WAS GOD'S DOING. Here is that message we need to hear in our times of REJECTION: Trust God! Don't give up on life. Don't cave in to despair. Don't trap yourself to that lost group who believe they will never see the sun shine again. TRUST GOD!!** God is the restorer of broken dreams. God takes the stone that was rejected and makes it the very cornerstone.

In 1888, G. Campbell Morgan was a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry. He passed the doctrinal examination but then faced the trial sermon. In an enormous auditorium that could seat more than 1,000, there sat three ministers and 75 others who came to listen. Morgan was not up to the task. Two weeks later, his name appeared among those who were refused entrance to the ministry that year.

Morgan wired to his father one word, "**Rejected.**" Then he wrote in his diary: *"Very dark everything seems. Still, God knows best."* Quickly came the reply from his father: *"**Rejected on earth. Accepted in heaven. - Dad.**"* G. Campbell Morgan went on to become one of Christendom's great preachers.

There are many believers who could have that carved on their tombstones: **"Rejected on earth. Accepted in heaven."**

KEEP TRUSTING GOD!! If you are faithful to God, God will be faithful to you. God will heal your hurts and give you hope once again. *"The stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes."* FOR THE "CORNERSTONE" IS AMAZING. FOR ON IT ALL OUR SUPPORT REMAINS...EVEN IN THE WORST TIMES OF LIFE!! **SO, DON'T FORGET, HE IS THERE FOR YOU!!** Amen.