



FINDING

HIDDEN

*Treasure*

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# Scripture Passage

Matthew 13:44-46

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

NRSV

# Sermon

## Finding Hidden Treasure

Today's parables are about the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a treasure hidden in a field that someone found and hid, and sold everything he had to buy it. It's also compared to a merchant in search of fine pearls, and on finding one pearl of great value, sells everything he has to buy it.

The common thread is finding something so valuable that one sells all that they have to obtain it. What is it about the kingdom of heaven that makes it more precious than all that we have? That is the mystery of these two parables.

## The Kingdom of Heaven

Earlier on in Matthew, Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's prayer. This is how it starts: ***"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:9-10).** Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. This kingdom is the

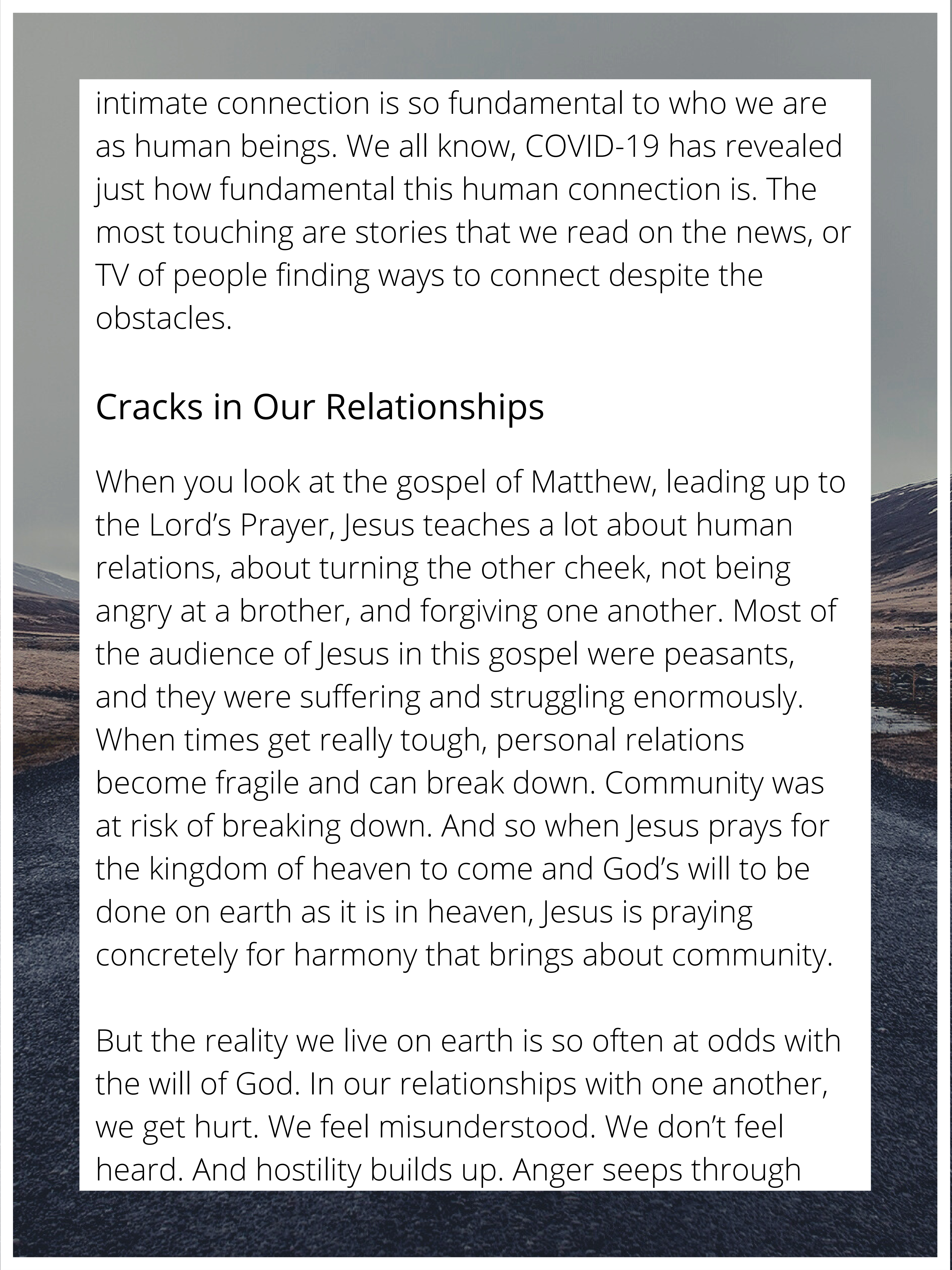


kingdom of heaven. And the kingdom of heaven is the *place where God's will is done.*

God's will can be many things and there are many ways that God's will can manifest in your life. I believe that in Jesus's mind there was also a deeply social and communal aspect to God's will.

In the kingdom of heaven, where God's will is done, people live in harmony. There is love, joy and peace in mutual co-existence. Conflict is not absent, but there is a mature working through of differences, there is healing of enmity and hostility, and there is reconciliation. Where there were imbalances in power or fairness in the relationship, those imbalances are balanced, and fairness is achieved.

I believe that is what the kingdom of heaven is like, where God's will is done. I believe this was God's intention for human beings on earth. God's creation was good. God was pleased. But humanity was not complete. After God created Adam, God saw that it was not good for him to be alone. And so in creating Eve, the creation became complete. It was complete when humanity could experience the joy that comes from being one and together. This desire and need for



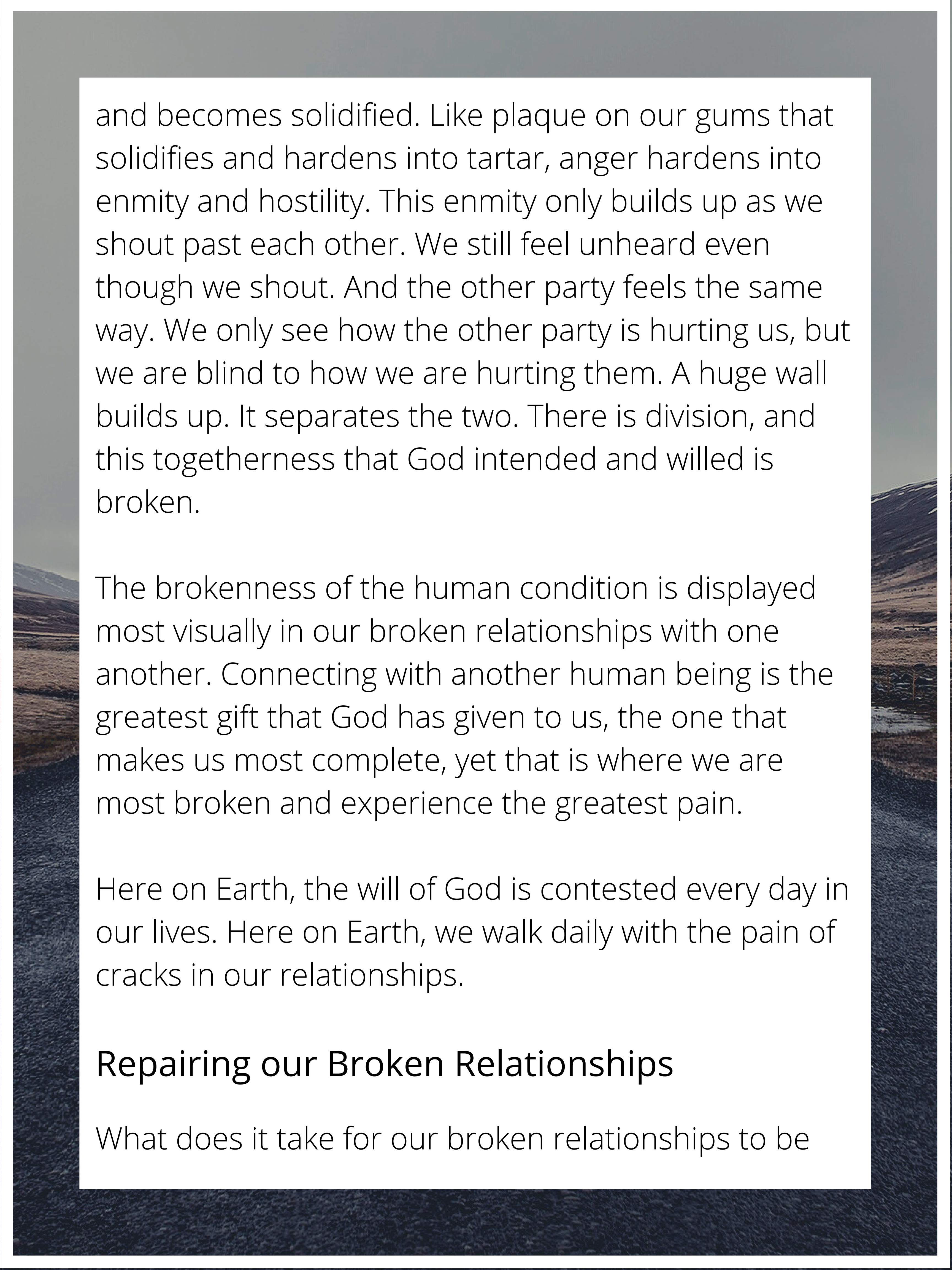
intimate connection is so fundamental to who we are as human beings. We all know, COVID-19 has revealed just how fundamental this human connection is. The most touching are stories that we read on the news, or TV of people finding ways to connect despite the obstacles.

## Cracks in Our Relationships

When you look at the gospel of Matthew, leading up to the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches a lot about human relations, about turning the other cheek, not being angry at a brother, and forgiving one another. Most of the audience of Jesus in this gospel were peasants, and they were suffering and struggling enormously. When times get really tough, personal relations become fragile and can break down. Community was at risk of breaking down. And so when Jesus prays for the kingdom of heaven to come and God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, Jesus is praying concretely for harmony that brings about community.

But the reality we live on earth is so often at odds with the will of God. In our relationships with one another, we get hurt. We feel misunderstood. We don't feel heard. And hostility builds up. Anger seeps through





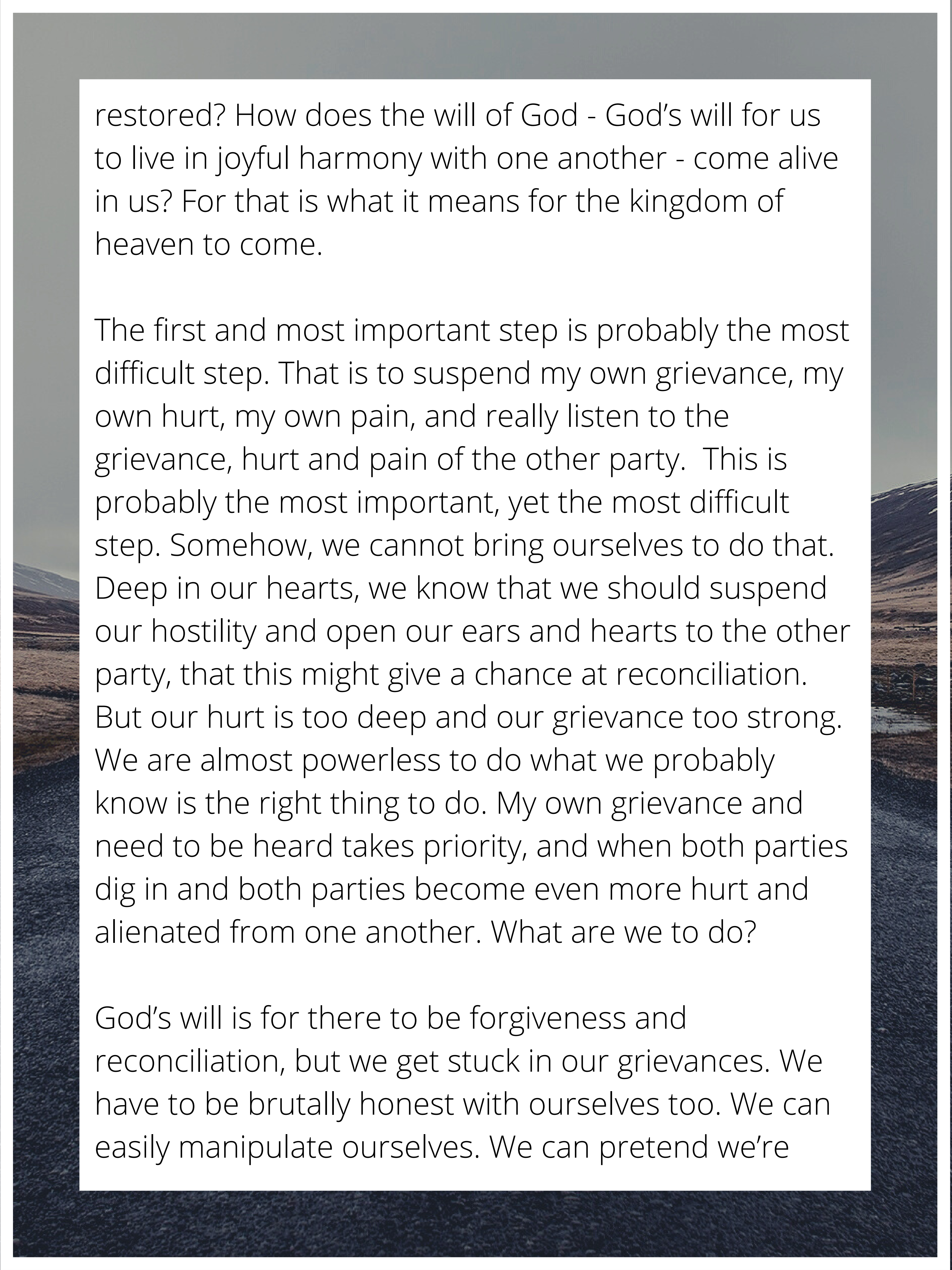
and becomes solidified. Like plaque on our gums that solidifies and hardens into tartar, anger hardens into enmity and hostility. This enmity only builds up as we shout past each other. We still feel unheard even though we shout. And the other party feels the same way. We only see how the other party is hurting us, but we are blind to how we are hurting them. A huge wall builds up. It separates the two. There is division, and this togetherness that God intended and willed is broken.

The brokenness of the human condition is displayed most visually in our broken relationships with one another. Connecting with another human being is the greatest gift that God has given to us, the one that makes us most complete, yet that is where we are most broken and experience the greatest pain.

Here on Earth, the will of God is contested every day in our lives. Here on Earth, we walk daily with the pain of cracks in our relationships.

## **Repairing our Broken Relationships**

What does it take for our broken relationships to be



restored? How does the will of God - God's will for us to live in joyful harmony with one another - come alive in us? For that is what it means for the kingdom of heaven to come.

The first and most important step is probably the most difficult step. That is to suspend my own grievance, my own hurt, my own pain, and really listen to the grievance, hurt and pain of the other party. This is probably the most important, yet the most difficult step. Somehow, we cannot bring ourselves to do that. Deep in our hearts, we know that we should suspend our hostility and open our ears and hearts to the other party, that this might give a chance at reconciliation. But our hurt is too deep and our grievance too strong. We are almost powerless to do what we probably know is the right thing to do. My own grievance and need to be heard takes priority, and when both parties dig in and both parties become even more hurt and alienated from one another. What are we to do?

God's will is for there to be forgiveness and reconciliation, but we get stuck in our grievances. We have to be brutally honest with ourselves too. We can easily manipulate ourselves. We can pretend we're



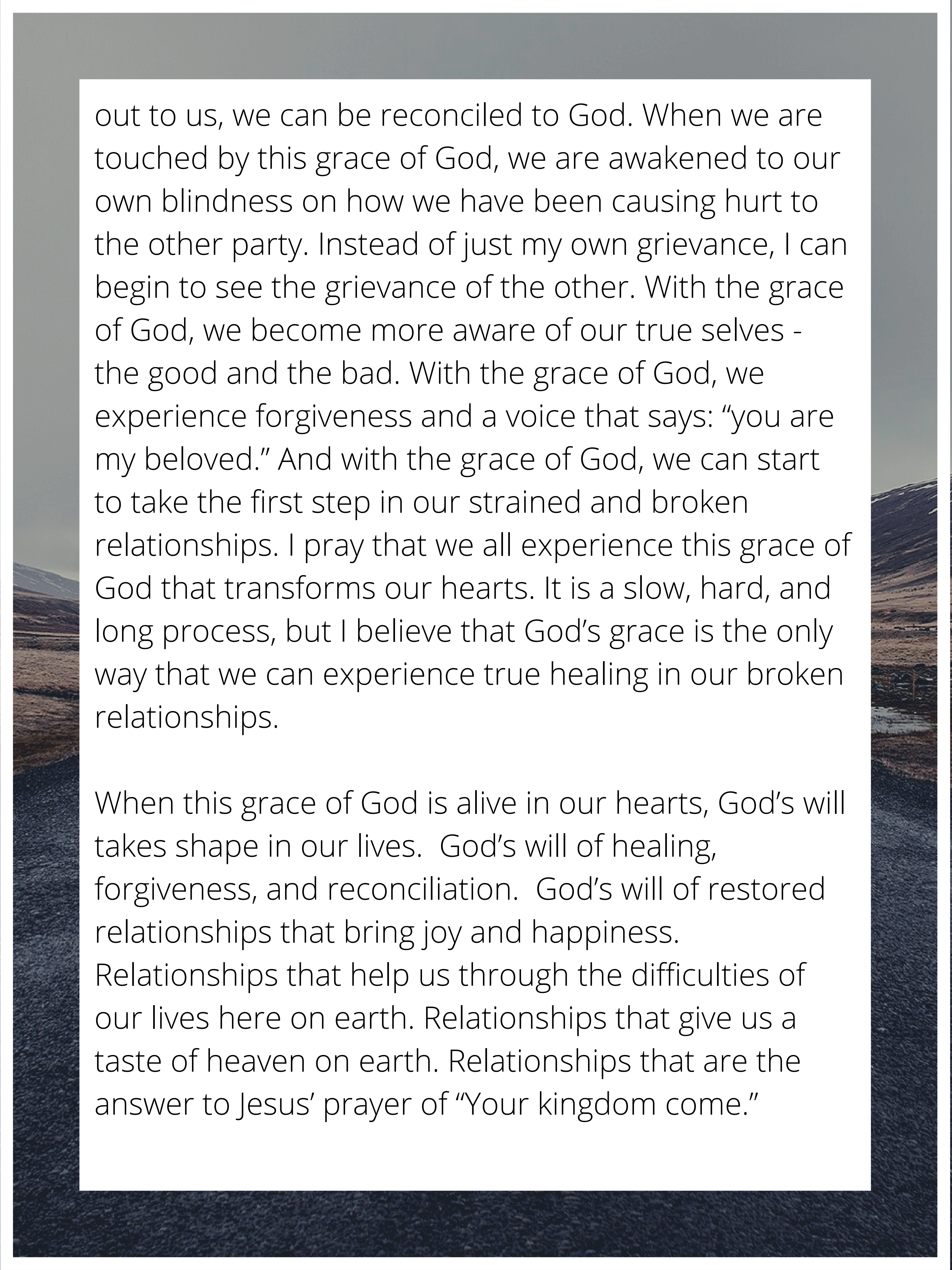
listening, but usually the real purpose of this is getting them to a place where they'll understand us, so that their minds will be changed to see our point of view. Our own hearts are not really willing to change. It is so difficult to listen with a truly open and humble heart, to have a heart that is willing to change, and not a heart that's trying to change the other. What can be done?

## Grace of God

I am so thankful for the example of God's grace and love. We can extend that first hand because God has extended that hand first to us. God has forgiven us and reconciled us to God so that we can be in a restored relationship with God. That is what God wills for us. That is the essence of our faith.

We call this divine initiative of God, the grace of God. God's grace reached out to me when we were distant and alienated from God. God forgave us for the malice and ill-will we harbour in our hearts, against God's will. In Christ, God humbled himself in human form and came down to meet us at our level, to be with us where we are. And in Christ, God has extended that hand of friendship to us. Because God first reached





out to us, we can be reconciled to God. When we are touched by this grace of God, we are awakened to our own blindness on how we have been causing hurt to the other party. Instead of just my own grievance, I can begin to see the grievance of the other. With the grace of God, we become more aware of our true selves - the good and the bad. With the grace of God, we experience forgiveness and a voice that says: "you are my beloved." And with the grace of God, we can start to take the first step in our strained and broken relationships. I pray that we all experience this grace of God that transforms our hearts. It is a slow, hard, and long process, but I believe that God's grace is the only way that we can experience true healing in our broken relationships.

When this grace of God is alive in our hearts, God's will takes shape in our lives. God's will of healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. God's will of restored relationships that bring joy and happiness. Relationships that help us through the difficulties of our lives here on earth. Relationships that give us a taste of heaven on earth. Relationships that are the answer to Jesus' prayer of "Your kingdom come."



# Hidden Treasure

When our lives are filled with these kinds of restored relationships - as God intended them - then we have found the hidden treasure that is the kingdom of heaven here on earth. Isn't that worth more than all the riches we can afford? People say that COVID-19 has been a time to pause and re-examine what is important to us. Let us seek with all of our hearts this hidden treasure of God's will, relationships deep in love, forgiveness and reconciliation. Let us ask God for God's grace to lead us there. I pray that you may all find this hidden treasure in your lives.