When the poet Edwin Markham reached retirement age, thinking he was set for life, he discovered he was penniless. So the story goes, his banker had defrauded him. From that point on he was obsessed with the evil done to him by a man who was suppose to be his friend.

We are told that Markham was so bitter that he could no longer write poetry. However, one day while suffering the pain of resentment, the thought came to him that bitterness and the desire for revenge was eating him up, and that he must forgive the man.

It was then that he wrote his best poem:

“He drew a circle and shut me out-

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout,

But love and I had the wit to win;

We drew a circle that took him in!”

Augustine once wrote, “If you are suffering from a bad man’s injustice, forgive him lest there be two bad men.” Forgiveness is much better than revenge. In my judgment, it is the sign of a gentle nature. On the other hand, to seek revenge is the sign of a savage nature. We are not animals, but human beings made in the image of God. The brave know how to forgive. But a coward never forgives, for it is not in his nature to forgive.

I’m convinced that the same grace of God that heals us demands that we forgive people who hurt us the most.

Revenge don’t work, forgiveness does.