

The Wall – A Sunday Morning Story

Once upon a time, some people on a road were stopped by a wall.

We didn't mind. It was a good place to stop for a while, and as more people coming down the road stopped at the wall, a community grew at its foot. Most people enjoyed gathering together, so the wall seemed like a fortuitous event, a good reason to rest and celebrate and work together for a while.

The wall wasn't impassable, of course. Some could still clamber over the pile and continue on their journey, but the wall was a little daunting, and the happy community was so tempting, and few bothered.



People being people, we couldn't just leave the wall alone. Some started stacking the rocks, following rules laid down by clever people in the community that created a more stable, stronger wall. They built the wall taller and wider. They faced it with smooth sheets of stone to make it more attractive.

As the wall became more elaborate and more difficult to pass, the community grew. We didn't consider this a *bad* result; that wall was most impressive, and if the journey was held up for a time, well, one could admire the wall, and also learn a little masonry. And the community was definitely a

wonderful treasure — a little fractious and crowded, perhaps, and prone to crime and other vices of large gatherings of people, but that wasn't the wall's fault.



The wall was a dominating feature in the community, always there, always growing, and unsurprisingly, art erupted spontaneously. People expressed themselves on the wall; the wall was glorified and made ever more beautiful in diverse ways, and in many styles, and for a long time, the only art was wall art.

The art was lovely, but was increasingly constrained—good art must respect the wall, not challenge it. The wall became a funnel for ideas, focusing them all on one subject, the wall itself.

Oddly enough, while the human difficulties of living in a crowded community behind the wall were never blamed on the wall, the human joy and skill and love of beauty that danced across it were entirely credited to the wall. People are funny that way.



The wall was worshipped.

The road was forgotten or ignored, and our community assumed the wall is our destination, not simply a convenient stop on a long journey. The wall is what we are all about.

Some few who managed to get over the wall still called back to the community.

"Come over, the road goes on!"

"Is there another wall over there that we can adore?" asked the people of the wall.

"No, just a long, long road to somewhere else."

"Is it dangerous? Is it risky? Are there any little walls we can cling to?"

"I don't know! There are certainly dangers, but there are also wonders! Come on!"

But the wall people refused.



More than refused; we built the wall higher and stronger, we topped it with razors, and we spread stories that the other side was a land of fire and torture, and that the road led only to death. And just to prove it, people who tried to cross the wall were set on fire, and killed, and we frightened everyone in the community so badly that we could even stop killing them and people still cowered in fear before the wall.

The wall was huge and powerful. It had grown to be symbol of art and beauty and hope and unity and terror and oppression and diversity and dreams and cruelty and kindness. It stood in our way, and echoed and amplified and personified the condition of that people camped in the shadow of the wall. Even people who wanted to continue on down the road had to respect the monstrous construction, and some even said we need to revere it, and let all the people in the community know that it's all right to love a barrier that has loomed over them for thousands of years.

Some of us are looking up and beyond, though. We're saying it certainly is an impressive piece of work, but ... ***it's still a wall.***

We have a different answer.



I'm sorry, but this story doesn't have an ending yet, and I don't know how it will turn out. We've only just begun to tear down the wall.

The only way we'll get past it is if more of us wake up to the fact that it *is* a wall, and it must be overcome. Some of you may prefer to build ramps over it, or tunnel under it, or find alternative routes around it; some of you may prefer dynamite. I don't care what your strategy is, as long as more of us stop praising the wall and start treating it as an obstacle.

The jubilee will be held on the other side of the wall. Beyond that, who knows? But it *will* be exciting.



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