

Movers Accidentally Drop Virtuoso's One-of-a-Kind Piano Worth \$194,000, Rendering It 'Unsalvageable'

The Wired Word for the Week of February 23, 2020

In the News

"Now it is no longer."

That's how Canadian Angela Hewitt, one of the world's leading classical pianists, described the fate of her rare handmade Fazioli piano, valued at \$194,000 which she had used for almost all her recordings over 17 years.

The loss occurred earlier this month in Berlin when, following her recording of Beethoven's piano variations, movers taking the instrument out of the recording studio, dropped it, breaking the iron frame and smashing much of the structure, lid and case.

Italian engineer and pianist Paolo Fazioli, the owner of Fazioli Pianos, examined the wreckage and declared the handmade instrument, the only one in the world with four pedals, "unsalvageable."

Hewitt, who described the piano as her "best friend" said that she "loved how it felt when I was recording -- giving me the possibility to do anything I wanted." She was so shocked by the loss that it took 10 days before she revealed the "very sad piece of news."

The pianist said, "It makes no sense, financially or artistically, to rebuild this piano from scratch. It's kaput. The movers of course were mortified. In 35 years of doing their job, this had never happened before. At least nobody was hurt."

Simon Markson, managing director at Markson Pianos in London, said, "There are six or seven top companies making good quality pianos. Different pianos appeal to different people according to tone and touch. The Fazioli is good for Bach," he said.

Hewitt said she will choose a new Fazioli in the next few months, writing, "I hope my piano will be happy in piano heaven."

Terence Lewis, co-owner of London's Jaques Samuel Pianos, said the destruction of the piano was "like losing a limb."

Lewis added, "Every single piano is different and you grow with them and they change as they age and you develop together. For a pianist at that level a piano becomes an extension of your body and that's why she dragged it around for her recordings."

More on this story can be found at these links:

'It's Kaput.' Movers Accidentally Drop Virtuoso's One-of-a-Kind \$194,000 Piano. *CNN*
Virtuoso Mourns Beloved £150,000 Piano Smashed by Movers. *The Guardian*

Applying the News Story

Because Hewitt's piano was one of a kind, her loss is, in some ways, unique. But in other ways, it is like losses many of us experience. Traveling musicians have had their instruments stolen, people relocating have had possessions damaged beyond repair or lost in transit, college students

have lost thesis work when the hard drive on their laptop failed, homeowners have lost irreplaceable family photos, heirlooms and even their homes to floods, fires and other natural disasters, writers have lost potential books when the scrap of paper they wrote the initial idea on was mistakenly thrown out, brides and grooms have lost their paid-for wedding venue when that location was shuttered by bankruptcy, individuals have lost their savings to scam artists, others have seen their reputation demolished by one spectacularly bad act, and so on.

Loss is a fact of life.

Of course, our lives are also deeply affected by the loss of loved ones, but for purposes of this lesson, we are limiting our thinking about loss to tangible things we treasure for their monetary value or usefulness to us or for emotional or sentimental reasons.

So dealing with that kind of irretrievable loss will be the topic of this lesson.

The Big Questions

1. Assume you have three minutes to evacuate your house in the face of an oncoming natural disaster. Assume also that your family members and pets are already safely outside. What items would you grab in those three minutes to take with you? Why?
2. When, if ever, has the course of your life changed because of some irretrievable loss? Looking back, what weight would you give that loss now?
3. What are we implying when we say that something is "gone" (or "kaput," to use Hewitt's word)? What are we implying theologically when we make such a statement?
4. Regarding the loss of her piano, Hewitt took some consolation in the fact that no one was hurt in the accident. While that is an important outcome, how much solace do you suppose it provided her? More importantly, if *you* were to lose your long-time home to fire, how much would the fact that none of your loved ones was hurt ameliorate the pain of your loss?
5. Loss often seems capricious -- visited upon people without regard to whether they are righteous or not. How do you explain that kind of loss theologically?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Jeremiah 36:1-2, 4, 21-23, 27-28

In the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. ... Then Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the LORD that he had spoken to him.

... Jehudi read it to the king and all the officials who stood beside the king. Now the king was sitting in his winter apartment ..., and there was a fire burning in the brazier before him. As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a penknife and throw them into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier.

...

Now, after the king had burned the scroll ..., the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: Take

another scroll and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which King Jehoiakim of Judah has burned. (For context, read 36:1-32.)

Jeremiah 36 tells of Jeremiah, at God's instruction, dictating a document to his helper Baruch, containing God's warning to Judah's king Jehoiakim about the consequences that would befall Judah if Jehoiakim and his administration did not turn from their wicked ways. Upon hearing the warning read from the document, however, Jehoiakim burned the scroll containing it, so that the document was lost.

The Lord, however, instructed Jeremiah to write it again, lacing it with additional warnings. The loss of the original document could not silence the word of the Lord.

Questions: How do you suppose Jeremiah felt at being told he had to create the document all over again? Do you think he worried he might not be able to remember all that he'd said on the first copy? What lesson do you draw for yourself from this story regarding ideas, recipes, family histories, diaries and other records you have written, which are susceptible to being lost? To what degree do you trust your memory to recreate them? Why?

Matthew 6:19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (No context needed.)

Jesus made this comment in the Sermon on the Mount, and on the face of it, it seems to offer Christians a way to deal with loss and gone-ness -- by not investing temporal things with more value than they deserve. Perhaps Jesus was implying that any possession that is subject to deterioration and theft or decay is not of eternal value, and we should not give it such.

But is that possible? Don't we cherish those photos of our children? Isn't the desk our great-grandfather built something more than just a useful piece of furniture? Isn't our archive of family recipes more than just directions for fixing tasty meals? What's the value to us of the Bible our now-deceased parent used and underlined? Or the souvenir our grandmother brought back from her time in Africa?

All these things and more are subject to the moth and rust and theft Jesus spoke about, and their loss can take something intangible but important from us.

Questions: What do you think was Jesus' main point in this statement? Where have you been able to apply this verse in your life?

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ... a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away ... (For context, read 3:1-8.)

The passage from which this verse comes is about "seasons" or "times" in one's life. Verses 2-8 are a list of things for which there is a proper time. In these verses, God plays no explicit role in setting the "seasons" and "times," and the writer of Ecclesiastes doesn't say why things occur at the times they do. The list is simply a series of empirical observations.

The seven verses in 2-8 contain 14 antitheses, encompassing 28 experiences known to all human beings, all organized under the heading, "For everything there is a season ... " (v. 1). The first item on the list, "a time to be born, and a time to die" (v. 2), is clearly out of human hands, but

the rest involve human choices. The wise person's task evidently is to try to determine when the right time has come and to move visibly with whatever invisible but God-given program there may be.

Verse 6 is especially applicable to the topic of this lesson -- determining when is the time to keep and when is the time to throw away. TWW team member Stan Purdum tells of facing just such a keep/throw away decision at the time he and his wife moved from the large home where they had lived for 25 years to a smaller home where they could be near their grandchildren. "In terms of human relationships," says Stan, "it was the right decision, but in terms of material things it was tough." That was especially so regarding some scrapbooks his much-loved grandmother had assembled about events in her life and with her husband and children. After she had died, with no other family member wanting the scrapbooks, Stan had accepted them and had stored them in his home, thinking how useful they would be if anyone ever wanted to write a Purdum family history. But now, with moving to smaller quarters, Stan had to thin down the possessions, and after checking with other family members, and still finding no takers, Stan reluctantly put the scrapbooks in the recycling bin, keeping just a very few things from them in a file folder.

"But I felt -- and still feel -- a sense of loss about them," Stan says.

If you read all of Ecclesiastes, you'll see that the writer of the book sees many of the comings and goings of life as absurd or meaningless, but, says Bible commentator W. Sibley Towner, the writer "does not describe the cycling of times as another absurdity, nor does he frame it with despair. On the contrary, he endorses it. Time is not out of joint: 'For everything there is a season.' Here at last he finds solidity and dependability. It is good that there is order in life. It is good that there is a time to die that stands over and against the time of birth, for to have it any other way would be to admit that there is no order at all but only arbitrary and erratic events. In 3:1-8, the [writer of Ecclesiastes] is able to affirm that the polarities within which life must be lived are both discernible and secure."

Question: Why do you think God assigned matters of keeping and throwing away to "times" and "seasons" rather than to eternity?

Proverbs 22:1

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. (No context needed.)

This proverb invites us to think about the value of one's reputation and what is lost when one's behavior sullies it.

Questions: What specifically is lost when one's name is no longer associated with "good"? Is a good name, like items saved to the Cloud, ever recoverable? How about lost friendships? Lost trust? How?