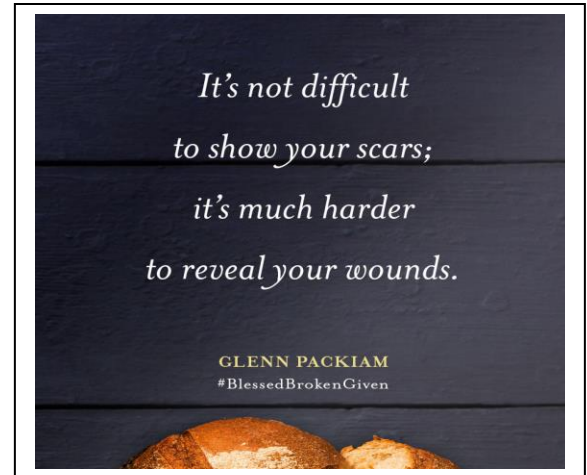


SUNDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2023.

YOUR LIFE AS BREAD.

Scripture: Luke 9:10-17.

Blessed Broken Given, Week 1: Your Life as Bread



Ah, the smell of freshly baked bread – isn't it delightful. The Bible describes bread as "the staff of life" and everywhere you go in the world, there is some version of bread – baguettes, croissants, tortillas, naan, doughy buns and of course, basic sliced bread. It is the building block of a meal, a staple in every diet. It was this way in the world of the Bible too. Bread was a common, ordinary meal.

In the wilderness, the Israelites were hungry and complaining to Moses and to God. Imagine their joy when God "rained" down manna – bread from heaven. As we turn to the story from Luke's Gospel, let's see how it speaks to us today.

Jesus had tried to slip quietly away from the crowds, but they found out where He was going and followed Him. How did He react? He did not show impatience, He welcomed the people and ministered to their needs.

How do you react to people who interrupt your schedule – as nuisances or as the reason for your life and ministry?

If we're honest, most of what we do is ordinary. We get up, maybe go for a walk, do some work, tinker at our hobbies, and try to do our best. We may have to take children, grandchildren, other family members to various appointments and activities and shop for our groceries. For the most part, nothing about our daily lives sets us apart from the people around us. It's just life. We might say, I am just like bread, ordinary! **But are you?**

Back to our story. So, this crowd, of 5000plus are pressing closer and closer to Jesus. And making their way through the throng, the disciples stand next to Jesus. **What did they see?** A huge crowd, noise, confusion – all people wanting to edge closer to Jesus. Did they hold their hands up to keep the crowd at a safe distance? Did they yell at them – stay back?

It was getting late in the afternoon, perhaps the weather was getting cooler. Maybe the disciples had whispered together and agreed to speak to Jesus. “Send them away!” Hmm, that's not very compassionate, is it? I doubt any of us have had such a large crowd wanting us to minister to them.

I wonder if we think that, when the needs of those in the community continue to grow and they are reaching out for food, comfort, and ministering, we cry: ***“Send them away, Jesus”***. But Jesus won't let them—or us—off the hook. This is what the disciples said, and I figure they would have been surprised by Jesus' response – you feed

them! The disciples protested, focusing their attention on what they didn't have (food or money).

If we're honest, this may be how we feel when we see the needs of our friends, family, and neighbours. It can all feel overwhelming. Turn on the news, and we're bombarded by more tragedies and hardships. Scroll through your media contacts and Facebook, and you see the difficult doctor's diagnoses or unexpected losses that people you know are dealing with. A simple 'sad face' emoji won't cut it.

You may reply and say you're praying for them, but what can you really do? It's just too much. And on top of that, you've got your stuff to deal with. Your own life is no walk in the park.

But what was Jesus' response? "You feed them" Surely Jesus wasn't serious! The needs of the people were overwhelming, and resources were in short supply. The impulse to send the people away is not entirely uncompassionate; it is also practical.

So here we have the disciples, going amongst the crowd asking: "do you have food to share?" "Can you help?" And a consistent response was "No." Except for a small boy who spoke up and said: "I have five loaves and 2 fish you can have." Did the disciples scoff – how is this enough food for all the people?

We were feeling that way when considering how to keep our pantry going. But we turned to God and look at the result. We

should never think God would ask us to do something that we could not handle with His Almighty help. We must not let our lack of resources blind us to God's power.

The disciples bring the only food available to Jesus – 5 small loaves and 2 fish. How was that going to feed all the people? It seems the disciples were forgetting who was with them in this situation, Jesus, the Son of God. And they had witnessed many miracles Jesus had performed.

Do you ever respond like the disciples did – get hung up on what you do or don't have; judge others; view your circumstances from a worldly view, not from what God can do?

Jesus blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to His disciples to distribute. Why did He do this? Because of Jesus's miraculous blessing, what was not enough has become more than enough. And weary disciples who were willing to be the bearers of bad news to hungry people now become the carriers of good news to those same people.

Jesus changed the story. A “desolate place” became a place of abundance, providing a banquet. A story that began with “not enough” ended with there being more than enough. This is what happens when Jesus takes something that we think is just ordinary—bread! —and blesses it, breaks it, and gives it.

In the hands of Jesus, your life becomes *blessed*.

It is not about accumulating or achieving more, it is about having your identity recovered and your true calling revealed. It is to be given a new name and adopted into the family of God.

In the hands of Jesus, your life becomes *broken*.

There are several different kinds of brokenness that come from our own failure – our sin, our participation in the spread of wickedness and in the pain of living in a fallen world. But all these kinds of brokenness can be placed in Jesus' hands. This brokenness is not about wallowing in your sin or fixating on how miserable you are. It is about allowing the grace of God to humble you, be vulnerable and transform your heart, after all, *bread that is not broken cannot be shared*.

In the hands of Jesus, your life becomes *given*.

We are not here for ourselves. Life with Jesus is deeply personal but never private. The openness that comes from being broken is meant to lead you outward. There is a hunger in the world around us, a deep groan for something more. When your life becomes blessed and broken in Jesus's hands, He gives *you* out for the life of the world. You become the way others find the Bread of Life. But to be that way, you must first experience the blessing and embrace the brokenness—only then will you be consecrated to bring change in powerful ways.

I wonder if you have seen the similarity in this story to our story of providing important outreach programs to those in the community. We must acknowledge the miracle we have witnessed from God in relation to the provision of food to keep serving those in the community who are hungry, need support, welcoming and ministering to.

This story guides us to not hold on tightly to the food, because when we give willingly and humbly and keep faith in God, He will provide always. Like the boy who willingly gave his five loaves and two fish – all the food has been willingly given and God calls us to share freely, because He will always answer our call for more.

That's what Jesus does: He blesses us and takes our brokenness and turns it into something that can be for the good of someone else. Purpose is restored!

Jesus turned a desolate place into a place of abundance.

That's what Jesus does! *Do you see it?* Do you see the world as Jesus sees it? You must wonder if Jesus really saw their location as a remote and deserted place. Or did He really know that wherever He went, there was the blessing and fullness and glory of God?

This is all Jesus's work! And that's the good news. You don't have to be epic. You don't have to be spectacular. You can be bread. Just

as bread seems common and ordinary, but is crammed full of glory, so your life is miraculous and holy. That's what happens when Jesus takes us into His hands.

Your ordinary can be crammed full of glory. Your not-enough-ness can become 'more than enough'. Your everyday can become full of purpose.