

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup>**

**Broken.**

**Scripture: John 11:17-27**

Spring is here – have any of you started doing any spring cleaning? Amazing things were found just in my small

kitchen drawers – items that were chipped or broken, leads to I don't know what, even a few nails. I wonder if you have a cupboard or space where you tend to toss things in, thinking – I will tidy up later or perhaps, I will use it someday?

There may be piles of tools or furniture or lawn equipment that was once sparkly and new, but is now rusted or scratched, missing parts and knobs and handles. It's on your list to fix. But you've got to find the right piece or talk to someone who knows. But you never get to it. And so, it just sits there. Eventually, it's just time to get rid of it. That's usually what happens to broken things. We purge them from our lives. They are no longer of any use to us.

Last week we talked about how difficult it is to imagine our ordinary, common lives being **blessed** and sacred and holy. Yet that is what happens to our story when we surrender to Jesus. To be blessed is to have our identity recovered and restored; it is to become who we were made to be, carriers of the glory of God.



**This week, I want to talk to you about the word “broken”.**

**We use the word “broken” in several ways.**

Brokenness can describe our own *frailty*. This is the experience of facing a situation and realizing our own limitations and finiteness.

Brokenness can refer to our own *failure*. When we come up short, when we miss the mark, when we fail what is required of us in each situation or relationship, we come face to face with our brokenness.

Brokenness is also a way of speaking about the *fallen world*. When sickness or death occurs, when tragedies happen, we hear creation groan. The creaking and cracking of the world, things coming apart from the seams—all these are signs of the brokenness of the world. Sadly, we are witnessing this more and more in our world.

***Today I want to focus on the last two - the brokenness of our failure and of the fallen world.***

***What can Jesus do with our brokenness?***

Like bread that is broken, does it begin to lose its freshness? Do we become stale and useless? Or does Jesus receive our brokenness into His hands?

**Let’s talk first about the brokenness of our failure.**

Unlike the gods and priests of other religions in the ancient world, Israel’s God provided a sacrifice specifically for the removal of guilt.<sup>i</sup>

Have you ever heard the saying – scape goat. This came from the one day of the year known as the Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest would first offer sacrifices to cleanse himself. Then he would select two goats. After laying hands on one goat and imparting to it all the sins of the nation, the priest would lead that goat out into the wilderness. **Do you catch the meaning of the act?**

The goat took the ***blame*** and was led away—a picture, an enacted parable, of God removing guilt from His people. The second goat was sacrificed, and its blood was sprinkled on the altar inside the holy of holies. This goat took the ***punishment***—a picture of God allowing the people to be spared judgment.

These elaborate and symbolic acts were found only in the Israelite religion. Their God was the only god who made a way to deal with sin, guilt, and shame.

**In the *brokenness* of our own sin, we can find a *blessing* that removes guilt.**

All the stuff about goats, priests, temples, and sacrifices was just a foreshadowing of what was to come. There is one Priest who was also the sacrifice and, in fact, also the temple. He was so great that He summed up in Himself all the three main components of the old Israelite religion. And in doing so, He brought it to its fulfillment, to

its culmination, and to its closure. His name is Jesus. Jesus, the great high priest. Jesus, the perfect sacrifice. Jesus, the true temple.

### **We read in Hebrews 9:13-14 Message bible**

*When the Messiah arrived, He bypassed the sacrifices consisting of goat and calf blood, instead using His own blood as the price to set us free once and for all. If that animal blood and the other rituals of purification were effective in cleaning up certain matters of our religion and behaviour, think how much more the blood of Christ cleans up our whole lives, inside and out. Through the Spirit, Christ offered Himself as an unblemished sacrifice, freeing us from all those dead-end efforts to make ourselves respectable, so that we can live all out for God.*

**Numbers 6:24-26 states:** *“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”*

Because of Jesus, every word of that blessing is now true for all who belong to Him. It is no longer a ***petition*** but a ***proclamation***. We have used this blessing as our dismissal.

### **Jesus takes the brokenness of our sin and gives us peace.**

**But what about the brokenness of the world?**

How does Jesus deal with that? What if our lives have been broken because of the brokenness of the world?

## **Let's explore our Scripture reading from John's Gospel.**

After their brother Lazarus's death, the question that both Martha and Mary asked of Jesus is the very question that haunts us in our suffering: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died". It's the question that arises every time pain is disconnected from justice when suffering is the result not of guilt but of the brokenness of the world.

### ***Couldn't You have prevented this, God?***

When a person suffers needlessly, when pain seems random, or worse, unjust, the appeal to the God of mercy and justice rings throughout Scripture.

### ***How long, O Lord? Why do the righteous suffer?***

Jesus *loved* his dear friend, so why did he die? It's not as though Lazarus was an enemy of God or a wicked person. This must have caused Mary and Martha to wonder: ***Is there no justice in the world? Is there no compassion from God?***

What we often hope for from God is ***prevention***. In the face of the brokenness of the world, we want to be spared. We do not want to be bent or bruised by the brokenness of a groaning world. Jesus even taught us to pray that we might be spared the great day of trouble, trial, and testing. Yet for reasons beyond our grasp, God chooses not to major in prevention. Yet God opts for something He

must know is stronger than prevention, something we call ***redemption***.

You see it in this Lazarus story. While we often call what Lazarus experienced “resurrection,” this is not quite right. Lazarus was raised only to die again, so this is more accurately described as “resuscitation.” He was not raised in the same way that Jesus would be raised—with a perfected and glorified body that is incorruptible. Don’t get me wrong—I’m sure Lazarus was thrilled to experience it!

But ***resurrection*** is what awaits all who are in Christ. The resuscitation that Lazarus experienced was a sign of the resurrection to come. It is a clue suggesting what God will do about the brokenness of the world. Resurrection doesn’t tiptoe around death. It breaks death’s power completely. Resurrection is the reversal and undoing of death. That’s the power of redemption.

***Just as resurrection is stronger than death, so redemption is more powerful than prevention.***

When I was in the city last week I noticed many works of art, murals on walls and buildings. Some had been vandalized and spray painted over. Imagine the artist when they return, they see it has been vandalized, but instead of leaving it like that, they say “Whatever you scribble on this piece, I will find a way to make it even more beautiful than it was before.”

**Imagine** a chess player, unafraid of the opponent's strategy. It is a certain kind of genius for a chess player to block the moves the opponent wishes to make; it's a different order of brilliance altogether to say, "Whatever your move, I will still put you in checkmate."

It is one kind of power to say, "You shall not harm me!" It is a wholly other kind of power to say, **"Do your worst; I will prevail."**

On the cross, Jesus absorbed the full weight of evil and the judgment of God against it. Jesus became the sin that leads to death, and He became the curse that infects God's world. He drained the venom from the serpent and drank the poison to the last. He died the death that is at once sin's wage and God's verdict. And on the third day, the Father raised Him up from the dead. Now because of His resurrection, one day death will be swallowed up in victory.

**Only God can do this. Only God can take *brokenness* and bring *blessedness* from it. Only God can make blessedness *come through* brokenness.**

**Jesus takes the brokenness of the world and gives us hope.**

Whether the brokenness is from our frailty, our failure, or the fallenness of the world, we are still God's image-bearers, and this is still God's world—the world that He created, the world that He blessed.

**The sin and suffering God did not prevent are not beyond His capability to redeem.**

**What God *blessed*, He will *redeem*.** He has the power to make His blessing come to pass, over and against the infection of evil. God the creator blesses; God the redeemer carries the blessing to its completion, even through the brokenness that comes.

God's redemption makes even the broken become blessed. God did this by becoming the broken. In Jesus, the blessed God became the broken human so that broken humans might become God blessed.

**To be broken is to be opened up to the grace of God.**

When you place your brokenness in Jesus's hands, it becomes *openness*. It is brokenness that opens us up to grace, and grace that puts us together. The goal is to let the grace of God redeem and restore and repair.

There is an old Japanese art of mending broken pottery. ***Kintsugi*** means “**golden joinery**.” It's the art of joining broken pieces of pottery with a liquid resin that resembles gold. The result is a bowl or vase that is more beautiful, more aesthetically complex, and more valuable than the original piece. The new piece with golden seams became so popular among Japanese art collectors in the fifteenth century that some were even accused of purposely breaking pottery to repair it with gold.<sup>ii</sup>



That sounds like grace. Grace that takes what is broken and puts it back together in such a way that it is more beautiful and more valuable than it was before.

**Where is the brokenness in your life?** Is it from failure or from the fallenness of this world? Let your brokenness open you up to the grace of God. When grace comes rushing in, it does not leave us broken in our sin. It heals and restores and cleanses and forgives. It makes us new in a way that is more beautiful than we could have imagined.

**Grace is the gold that holds the broken pieces together.**

Let Him take your broken life today. Whether you're broken by your own failure or by the fallenness of this world, place your broken life in Jesus's hands.

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