**Blessed Broken Given, Week 3: Broken**

**Pastor Shirley Thomas**

**Luke 22:19 (CEB)**

*‘After taking the bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ’*

**Are any of you junk collectors?**

Odds are, in your garage or perhaps in a basement storage room, there are 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.

**This series is about seeing our lives as bread that Jesus takes in His hands, blesses, breaks, and gives for the life of the world.**

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

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

1. **Brokenness because of our own limitations**

First, I think brokenness is a way to describe our **own *frailty***. This is the experience of running up against our own limitations and finiteness.

As a young girl, I grew up believing that I was not good enough to do anything useful or purposeful in life. Most of my childhood and young adult life I believed that I wasn’t good enough, beautiful enough, smart enough, intelligent enough and grew up with a very negative self-image of myself. I pretended most times to be on top of the world and buried the pain of being compared to others even from my own household. I felt broken, unloved and despised myself. I went searching for love in all the wrong places. A broken life indeed. I came to the realization that I was harmful to myself and I needed a savior. I needed to be saved from myself. Having been brought up in a godly home and a brethren back ground, the word of God was constantly being recited and talked about at home. It was never really something that I took to heart until I came to crossroads of my own life where I had hit rock bottom and was a shame to my family and myself. My parents relentlessly prayed that I would meet the savior of the world. My school friends in Kuwait who got to know this savior invited me to join them for a youth fellowship called the Tuesday Fellowship and I went very reluctantly. My sole purpose was to meet old friends and make new ones. It was July 16th,1985 that I attended this fellowship. That night a young man shared the word of God and he spoke from John 8 and it was the story of the adulteress woman and how God forgave her all her sins and there was no one to accuse her anymore. My heart broke in the presence of Jesus forgiveness and I gave my life to Jesus Christ that evening. True repentance surged from within my heart and soul and my life was never the same again. Jesus came into my heart and started a great transformation work in me.

 Last week we talked about how difficult it is to imagine our ordinary, common lives actually 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.

1. **Brokenness because of our failure.**

Secondly, brokenness can also be a way to refer to our **own *failure****.* When we come up short, when we miss the mark, when we fail what is required of us in a given situation or relationship, we come face to face with our brokenness.

Coming back to my story of my own brokenness, due to issues of having very low self-esteem, I was a failure in many areas of my life. It has such a domino effect in our lives. Once Christ intervened in my life, I realized that I was believing a lot of lies about myself and started focusing on how Christ saw me and what the bible says about the truth. That began my journey and process of healing and success in many areas of my life. Once the son of Man sets you free you are free indeed.

1. **Brokenness because of the fallen world.**

Finally, 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.

**It’s these last two kind of brokenness—the brokenness of our failure and of the fallen world—that I want us to look at today.**

***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?

**[TEXT/PARTICIPATION]**

**Luke 22:19 (CEB)**

*‘After taking the bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ’*

This is the second “Blessed Broken Given” story in Luke’s gospel—the second time Jesus takes bread into His hands, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it.

The occasion here is Passover, the feast which commemorates God’s rescue of Israel from Egypt and God’s judgment of evil. In short, Passover is when God dealt with sin and evil. God delivered His people by providing a covering of blood over their sins. That makes this passage the perfect place to talk about what Jesus does with our own brokenness.

**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.[[1]](#endnote-1) The most dramatic way sin was dealt with in Israel’s worship came on the 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 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.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews was so excited about the way these symbols and elements of Israelite worship came to their fulfillment in Jesus that he could hardly contain himself. Like a good preacher, he began by asking rhetorical questions, hoping for an “Amen”:

**Hebrews 9:13–14 (CSB)**

*‘If the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow, sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God?’*

There was an old blessing, a prayer, the high priest in Israel would say over the people of God:

**Numbers 6:24-26**

*‘ “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 countenanceupon 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.* Hear it over you: “The Lord blesses you and keeps you; the Lord is smiling at you; the Lord is turned toward you and gives you peace.”

Do you still carry the guilt of your past sins? I still remember when I gave my life to Christ, I still carried a lot of guilt for the sins of my past and of course, we have people to remind us of that on and off. I was just a baby in the Lord. I knew a great change had come over me. I could feel and see the transforming power of God in my life but if I have to be honest with myself, I know that I carried the guilt of my past. Even when I wanted to take God at his word and believe it completely, people around me would not let me. I suffered from a lot of self-esteem issues. I didn’t feel I was good enough for myself or others. Acknowledging that I was broken and have so many limitations (from the first point that we learned today.) But God did not give up on me. He continued teaching me who I am in Him and slowly but surely, I started believing in His total forgiveness. His work on the cross was complete. I was forgiven in totality. Just as this was sinking into my mind and heart, I was invited by a friend to go to a seminar that was held in Kuwait and the keynote speaker was Ezekiel Francis a visiting Evangelist to Kuwait. After he gave his message, he asked if anyone would need prayer and that he was willing to pray for them. Something in me pushed me to go and stand in the lineup for prayer. There were a lot of people before me in the lineup. He closed his eyes and started laying hands on people and praying individually for each one of them. Then it came my turn and as he lay his hands on me, he prayed only that God would heal my broken body and mind and that I would know that I know that I know that I was set free. Something snapped into place at that time and I felt all my guilt was washed away. This man didn’t know me at all but God did and he knew what I needed to set me free and restore my peace.

**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 talk about the third kind of brokenness, the brokenness of the fallen world. [John 11:17-27]**

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? What about this virus that has changed everything in our lives today?* Or in the case of Lazarus, “See how much [Jesus] loved him!” This is set right next to “He healed the eyes of the man born blind. Couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?” 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.***

**[illustration]**

Imagine an artist who works a public piece, like a mural on a wall or a building. Imagine her choosing to leave her work out in the open, no ropes or cones restricting access. It is one kind of strength for an artist to prevent her work from being vandalized; it is another to say, “Whatever you scribble on this piece, I will find a way to make it even more beautiful than it was before.”

**[illustration]**

Now imagine a chess player, unafraid of his opponent’s strategy. It is a certain kind of genius for a chess player to block the moves his 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.

**[GOSPEL/INVITATION]**

**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.

**[Illus]**

There is an old Japanese art of mending broken pottery. *Kintsugi* means “golden joinery.”[[2]](#endnote-2) 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 in order to repair it with gold.[[3]](#endnote-3)

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. He is our true redeemer. Our savior and the savior of this broken world. We need Jesus every second of our life.

If you need any human help to go through this process, we have trained Stephen ministers in this church that can listen to you, walk with you and help you. The Stephen Ministry leaders are also preparing to do a training in the fall so please contact me if one of your spiritual gifts is compassion and you would like to serve in this church by carrying the burden of others with Jesus help having been blessed yourself by Christ and have overcome. “We are broken, then blessed to be a blessing

**Let us pray together.**

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Blake Gopnik, “Golden Seams: The Japanese Art of Mending Ceramics,” The Washington Post, March 3, 2009, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/02/AR2009030202723.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/02/AR2009030202723.html). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Gopnik, “Golden Seams.”

***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?

***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.

***How has Jesus blessed your brokenness after you have surrendered it to Him?*** [↑](#endnote-ref-3)