

Burlap Believer-Beauty In Brokenness!

Isaiah 30:12-18

March 11, 2018

4th Sunday of Lent

A couple of weeks ago I went to put a glass into the dishwasher and it slipped out of my hands and landed on the kitchen tile floor. Guess what happened to the glass?

The glass bounced off the tile floor back into my hands without a crack! Right!

The result was the glass broke into many pieces. I picked up the bigger pieces and the rest of the glass fragments I vacuumed up. The glass was broken beyond repair.

I would imagine most of us have dropped a bowl or a glass or some kind of glassware onto the floor and watched it shatter into pieces. It's no big deal if the glass was an everyday glass or an everyday plate that you had others just like it to replace it. Why do we buy dishes in sets of 6 or 8? It's not so we can serve that many guests. It's so we have backups when we lose one to the casualty of the tile floor.

But what if the glassware was a valuable family heirloom...a one-of-a-kind vase or ceramic figurine that was irreplaceable? Would you be banned from the family for breaking great-grandma's figurine that was given to her as a child?

A broken glass is replaceable. A broken family heirloom may not be replaceable but it is not the end of the family.

There is a brokenness that we all have experienced in our lives that can often seem irreplaceable. It is a brokenness that we don't see any hope of repair. It is a brokenness that can leave us wondering if we can even continue on with our lives.

Like the glass, we get dropped in life and we hit hard on the tile floor. Our hearts are shattered into a thousand pieces. It seems of little or any hope of putting the pieces back together. Our lives seem to have been broken beyond repair or recognition of the life we once knew.

In that moment God calls on us to see "beauty in brokenness!" The psalmist cried out that he felt like a "broken vessel." (Psalm 31:12)

In our bible reading the prophet Isaiah compared the lives of the people like a wall that has fallen and **"smashed to bits like a piece of pottery...smashed beyond recognition or repair."** vs. 14

I want you to look back on your life when you felt as though the prophet was describing a period in your life of brokenness. For some it may have been years ago...for others you are still trying to pick up the pieces of brokenness.

No matter when, where, or what caused your brokenness...God tells us that there is "beauty in brokenness." This "beauty in brokenness" will only come when we are willing to let God pick up the pieces and put us back together. Here is how He put it through Isaiah to the people:

"Your salvation, (beauty in brokenness) requires you to turn back to me and stop your silly efforts to save yourselves. Your strength will come from settling down in complete dependence on me---" Vs. 15

As followers of Jesus our brokenness becomes opportunities of beauty when we trust his grace and love to put the pieces back together. This "beauty in brokenness" is seen in the lesson of faith that Jeremiah received from God at the potter's house. (Jeremiah 18:1-6)

The scene was the potter shaping a pot on the wheel. The clay pot became marred in the potter's hands. Instead of throwing it away the potter reshaped it into another pot that seemed best to him.

The lesson was that a marred or broken life is not thrown out. The potter has the power to transform and reshape the pot into a life that is pleasing to the potter. All the same clay and same cracks. God does the same with you and me. No matter the brokenness God brings beauty...when we allow our brokenness to be placed into his hands.

Another amazing example of the "beauty in brokenness" is seen in the Japanese art of "Kintsugi." (Ken-sue-gee) This is a ceramic restoration process developed in Japan in the fifteen hundreds. Broken ceramic pieces are sealed together, but instead of hiding the cracks, the cracks are boldly highlighted and traced over with lacquer and gold.

Kintsugi is the general concept of highlighting or emphasizing imperfections, visualizing mends and seams as an additive or an area to celebrate or focus on, rather than absence or missing pieces.

Normally anything that was broken and refurbished sells at a discount, but not Kintsugi pottery. Most often the broken ceramic piece actually turns out to be more beautiful and valuable than before it was broken. The broken, when placed in the hands of a Kintsugi artist, become more valuable.

This is like the economy of the kingdom of God. The beauty of the broken. When life drops us and we break, beauty comes when we place our brokenness into the hands of the Master, Jesus. He fills the broken with the beauty of his restoring love. Our brokenness becomes more valuable and beautiful when we allow God to fill the cracks with His grace!

The Lord is close to the broken. (Psalm 34:18) We have all been broken at some time in our lives. Sin breaks us. God desires us to come to him with a broken heart. (Psalm 51:17) We can never please God, or put our broken lives back together by outward actions---no matter how good---if our inward heart is not right with the Master. **"Heart shattered lives ready for love don't for a moment escape God's notice."** Psalm 51:17
Message bible.

Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah when he read from the scriptures in the temple these words:
"The spirit of the Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted..." (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1a)

It is so obvious in scriptures that God desires to bring beauty to the broken...the prodigal son, the woman at the well, the blind, the lepers, Matthew the tax collector, Peter the hot-headed commercial fisherman, etc.

This brings us to us. The Apostle Paul, a misfit of the faith, till he had his broken life made beautiful by Jesus, wrote that we are like **"jars of clay."**
(II Corinthians 4:7-18)

Paul had experienced many moments of brokenness in his life as he shared the good news of salvation in Jesus. He was beaten, imprisoned, stoned and left for dead. Yet, he proclaimed that through Jesus, there was beauty in brokenness. It is easy to focus on the brokenness and not on the healing and beauty of being restored by the love of Jesus who overcame the brokenness of crucifixion and death.

It is easy to lose heart and quit on life when we feel like we have been dropped and shattered. We all have moments of brokenness...moments when we struggle to see how we can be repaired and more valuable than before. Rather than giving up, we place our brokenness into the hands of the Master artist. His golden love fills the cracks and puts us back together...not hiding or denying the cracks...but rather seeing the beauty in the cracks of brokenness because of Jesus' love! The brokenness becomes a statement of love and truth in the restoring presence of Jesus.

It is true that God uses brokenness to bring beauty in the lives of those who willingly place the pieces into His creative hands.

It is sad to hear in our bible reading that there are people broken in life who are unwilling to place their brokenness into God's hands. They say, **"Nothing doing! We'll rush off on horseback!"** God says, **"You'll rush off, all right! Just not far enough."** Vs.16

How often in our brokenness do we try to fix ourselves...or we deny our brokenness...or we run from it. None of the above will bring beauty to our brokenness. There is only one way...Jesus love of restoration!

Hear the good news again at the end of our bible reading:
"But God's not finished. He's waiting around to be gracious to you. He's gathering strength to show mercy to you. God takes the time to do everything right--- everything. Those who wait around for him are the lucky ones." vs. 18

I know that there will be more glasses or dishes that are going to get broken due to my clumsiness. I just hope it won't be one that is irreplaceable.

I know life will come and drop me and try to break me. I am thankful that God will bring beauty to my brokenness as I trust His restoring love to fill the cracks.

I don't want to jinx you but you will most likely drop and break some glass or bowl again. In fact, just two days ago I dropped my phone and for the first time in my life shattered the glass face! Brokenness happens!

I also know that life will come along and drop you and seek to break you into a thousand pieces. When that happens call on the restoring love of Jesus. Place your life in his hands and watch the beauty He will bring from the brokenness.

We are jars of clay trusted to bring this good news to the broken in life. Jesus calls on us, as burlap believers, to see the beauty in our brokenness.

He also depends on us to share with the broken this restoring love of Jesus.

There is beauty in brokenness for those who place the pieces into the hand of the Master Potter...Jesus!

