

**Sermon - September 22, 2019**

**Your Life as Bread: *What can Jesus do with our brokenness?***

**Crown of Life Lutheran Church, Rigby, ID**

**PASTOR DAVE SCHILLING**

The overall theme of this series is about seeing our lives as bread that Jesus takes in His hands, and then He blesses, breaks, and gives it for the life of the world.

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.

So, let's begin today's discussion. Are any of you junk collectors?

I remember when my father-in-law passed away in 2000, Naomi and her brother Kurt principally cleaned out his garage. They were amazed and surprised at the "junk" their Dad had collected over the years. They would never find just one of anything ... he didn't have one hammer, he had 15 assorted hammers. He didn't a few fishing poles, he had about 130 poles of various sizes and kinds.

But then, he also had many tools and equipment items that just needed some minor repairs, such as 5 weed eaters ... 3 electric and 2 gas-operated, but he never got around to fix any of the them.

Odds are, in your garage there are piles of tools or furniture or lawn equipment that was once new, but perhaps are now rusted or scratched, missing parts or knobs or handles.

It's on your list to fix, but you never seem to get to it. And so, they just sit there. Eventually, you or a family member will have to just get rid of them.

That's usually what happens to broken things. We purge them from our lives, when they are no longer of any use to us.

So, this is what I want to talk to you about this week ... the concept of "broken".

Today, we use the term "broken" in several ways.

First, brokenness is a way to describe our own *frailty*. This is the experience of running up against our own limitations and finiteness. But this is not at all the kind of brokenness we're going to talk about today.

The second use of the term broken can be a way to refer to our own *failures ... our own sin*. 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.

Finally, the third use of the term broken is also a way of speaking about the *fallen world*. When sickness or death occurs, when tragedies happen, when evil enters our lives ... all these are signs of the brokenness of the world.

It's these last two kinds of brokenness, the brokenness of our failure and the brokenness of the fallen world ... that I want us to look at today.

*So, what can Jesus do with our brokenness?*

Similar to bread that is broken and begins to lose its freshness, do we become stale and useless? OR, does Jesus just receive our brokenness into His hands as He loves us?

*"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." Luke 22:19*

This is the second of the three "Blessed Broken Given" stories in Luke's gospel - the second time Jesus takes bread into His hands to bless it, break it, and give it.

The occasion here, of course, is Passover, the feast which commemorates God's rescue of Israel from Egypt and commemorates 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 failures.

Unlike the gods and priests of other religions in the ancient world, Israel's God provided a sacrifice specifically for the removal of guilt. The most dramatic way sin was dealt with in this day 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 and turn it loose.

Do you catch the meaning of the act? The goat took the *blame* for the people's sin, and then was led away - a picture of God removing guilt from His people.

The second goat was then 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. The God of Genesis was the only god who made a way for people to deal with sin, guilt, and shame.

What this leads to is that in the *brokenness* of our sin or failures, 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 came a Priest, who became as ultimate sacrifice. He was so great that He summed up in Himself all the main components of the old Israelite religion.

And in doing so, He brought it to its fulfillment and to its closure. His name is Jesus, of course ... the great High Priest, the perfect sacrifice.

The author of 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. Remember what he said in verses 13-14 in our first lesson?

*'If the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow ... sanctify ... the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ ... cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God?'* Hebrews 9:13-14

Then, there was an old blessing, a prayer, the high priest in Israel would say over the people of God, and you know it well ... because I usually close our worship with this blessing...

*"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace."* Numbers 6:24-26

Because of Jesus, every word of that blessing is now true for all who belong to Him. One could say that this is no longer a *PETITION* ... but a *PROCLAMATION*. Hear it again ...

"The Lord blesses you and keeps you;

the Lord is smiling at you;

the Lord is turned toward you and gives you peace."

In short, Jesus takes the brokenness of our sin and gives us peace.

Now then, what about the second kind of brokenness that we want to talk about today – 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?

After Martha and Mary's brother Lazarus dies, the question that they both asked Jesus is really 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 in our lives is disconnected from justice, when suffering is the not the result of our sin, but of the brokenness of the world.

The typical response to suffering is, "*Couldn't you have prevented this, God?*"

When a person suffers needlessly, when pain seems random, or worse, when pain seems unjust, the appeal to God rings THROUGHOUT Scripture with thoughts like "*How long do I have to suffer, O Lord?*" and "*Why do the righteous suffer?*"

Or, in the case of Lazarus, which is set right next to a miracle healing where Jesus “healed the eyes of the man born blind.”

Couldn't Jesus have kept Lazarus from dying? After all, Jesus *loved* his dear friend, so why did Lazarus die? It's not as though Lazarus was an enemy of God or a wicked person.

His death must have caused the sisters Mary and Martha to wonder ... “*Is there no justice in the world? Is there no compassion from God?*”

The fact is ... just like these sisters, what we often hope for from God is prevention.

In the face of the brokenness of the world, we want to be spared. We want the suffering to be prevented.

We do not want to be bent or bruised by the brokenness of a fallen 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.

Instead, God opts for something He knows is stronger than prevention, something we call redemption.

You see it in this Lazarus story. While we often call what Lazarus experienced “resurrection”, that is not correct since Lazarus was raised **ONLY** to die again. So, this event should be described as a “resuscitation.

He was not raised in the same way that Jesus would be raised ... with a perfected and glorified body that is incorruptible and will never die. Don't get me wrong ... I'm sure Lazarus was thrilled to experience his event.

But **RESURRECTION**, not resuscitation, is what awaits all of us who are in Christ. The resuscitation that Lazarus experienced was only a sign of the resurrection to come. It is a clue suggesting what God will do about the brokenness of the world.

And Resurrection doesn't tiptoe around death. It breaks death's power completely, since it is the reversal and undoing of death. That's the power of redemption.

The bottom line ... just as resurrection is stronger than death, so redemption is more powerful than prevention.

Imagine an artist who paints 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.”

Or, 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 still 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.

Metaphorically, He drained the venom from the serpent and drank all the poison. He died the death that is both 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 totally swallowed up in victory.

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

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 bottom line is this ... the sin and suffering that God did not prevent ... are not beyond His capability to redeem. Phrased another way...

What God *blessed*. He *will redeem*.

He has the power to make His blessing come to pass against all evil. God the creator blesses; God the redeemer carries the blessing to its completion ... even THROUGH the brokenness of our lives.

God's redemption makes even the broken become blessed. And God did this by becoming the broken.

Said another way ...

in Jesus, the blessed God became the broken human,

so that broken humans might become God blessed.

In short, 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 grace of God is designed to redeem and restore and repair us.

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 in order to repair it with gold.

This process of pottery repair sounds just 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.

So, 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 of our lives together.

Let Jesus 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, so grace can hold your broken life together in a most beautiful and blessed way. Amen