

BRING YOUR BROKENNESS
January 8, 2017 Communion –1 Corinthians 11: 23-32
The Church of the Covenant

A couple of interactions between teacher and student...First one, Teacher: "Clyde, your composition on "My Dog" is exactly like your brothers. Did you copy it?" Clyde answers: "No, sir, it's the same dog." Second one, Teacher: Aloysius, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?" Aloysius answers (according to this story): "A teacher." But my answer is different: A person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested is a PREACHER!!!!. We preachers say in twenty minutes what Jesus said in one sentence.

I recently attended a dinner where a completely secular kind of person was sitting beside me and she found it an idle curiosity that she happened to be seated beside a preacher. I'm not sure she ever had the opportunity to be seated next to someone like me for an entire evening. And basically her viewpoint was that religion was responsible for most of the world's ills, that it had no relevancy for her life or modernity, and that it was just a bunch of people pretending to be perfect and then being judgmental of others. It is all about rules enforced by judgmental people. You know, sometimes we in the church live in such a rarified environment that we lose touch with what some folks are thinking out there in the world. "Church World" as I call it, sometimes is just Christians speaking with other Christians. So having thought about it more, this is my answer to her about her uninformed prejudice that Christians are just a bunch of people pretending to be perfect and being judgmental of others...

I've been a preacher for 30 plus years now. Maybe if you were to look at The Church of the Covenant from the outside you might just see a big beautiful impressive building and people getting nicely dressed for Sunday service, and people trying hard to do the right things. From the outside in it might look like we are just into a lot of religiosity for religiosity's sake. But when you look at the church from the inside out, and you really get to know the people who assemble here every Sunday for worship, as I do, I will tell you that stereotype of people trying to look perfect on the outside and being judgmental of those on the outside just is not true. I know you all by now. I know why you are here. I know why something on the inside of your heart compels you to come to church. I know why you miss it when you are unable to come or are away from your church family. I know you more from the inside out. We're here not because we're perfect but because we need the Lord in our life. We're here precisely because we know we're not perfect and we need to know the One who is perfect, our Lord Jesus Christ. We're here because we can't get through the week without Jesus; we need the Holy Spirit to give us guidance; we need to be reassured that whatever is going on in our life that a loving God is still at work and that a Sovereign God has a Sovereign plan to bless us in our life. We're not here because we're trying to look good; we're here because we know that only God is good. We're not here because we have everything figured out; we're here because we need to know the One true and Living God who has figured everything else out in life. We're here because some of us are broken and hurting. We're here because we're imperfect and we need a Savior. We're here because we're incomplete and we know only God can make us whole. We're here because we don't know and we know we need to know the One who does know. Jesus. We're here because we have an aching need in our heart to be here. We're here because we've figured out one thing –People need the Lord and I personally need the Lord every day.

And in my answer to my secular, judgmental friend, I would continue to say to her this –I love a current Christian music piece and specifically the words to it. There's a Christian song current on the radio by Francesca Battistelli that is entitled, "If We're Honest". The lines that particularly speak to me are these:

“Bring your brokenness and I’ll bring mine. Cause love can heal what hurt divides. And mercy’s waiting on the other side. If we’re honest. If we’re honest.”

I love particularly the line –“Bring your brokenness and I’ll bring mine.” Because I think it speaks of a spiritual and reciprocal transaction, both between human beings and also between God and human beings. When we are real and transparent and admit that we aren’t perfect and both need one another and also need the Lord, “When we’re honest”, then we can bring our brokenness and place it on the table before another person. And then they are given permission to do the same –they can bring their brokenness and put it on the table before us, also. And in that transaction, it is a spiritual transaction, there can be healing and restoration, and what is broken can be restored and made whole. We speak with one another, we pray with one another, we share honestly and openly with one another, and we discover that the person across from us is broken and hurting also. In the midst of that conversation I am healed and you are healed and something beautiful occurs. Not because we’re trying to be perfect and all-knowing. But just because we trying to be HONEST. That’s church on Sunday mornings.

May I say, this is precisely what Jesus has done for us on the cross. His brokenness, He brings to us on a cross. It intersects with our brokenness in our life. If you see the cross, it IS a CROSS, an intersection of two things. And in the intersection of the two cross pieces of wood, in the intersection of His love and our brokenness, in the intersection of His pain and our pain, in the intersection of Him being broken on the cross our brokenness can be healed. If we’re honest.

May I say, I have read our passage of scripture from I Corinthians for years. I have spoken these words in the communion service for more than thirty years. But I have never fully understood these words before. Jesus is with His friends in the upper room and they are sharing in the Passover Meal, the forerunner of our communion service. Jesus takes bread and breaks it. Jesus symbolically in communion takes His body and breaks His body for us. It foreshadows what is about to occur at Calvary. His body broken, in order to make us whole. “You bring your brokenness” says Jesus, “because I am bringing mine on the cross at Calvary”. This is the spiritual transaction between Jesus and the believer; the intersection of His brokenness and ours. But the part I had never seen before was that it says precisely this: *“When (Jesus) had given thanks, he broke it...(He broke the bread).” (I Corinthians 11: 24)* As He is symbolically in the Last Supper breaking not only the bread, but symbolically, breaking His body and bringing His own brokenness to us, Jesus is GIVING THANKS. He thanks God for the broken bread and He thanks God for His body which is about to be broken on the cross. Why?

Because Jesus loves us so much that He WITH THANKS goes to the cross and experiences brokenness, because Jesus knows that our brokenness will be healed through His.

In the middle of this sacrament, in the middle of experiencing Jesus in close communion with Him today, Jesus says to us and speaks into our heart –“You bring your brokenness...and in the breaking of this bread and in the breaking of my body...I’ll bring mine.”, says Jesus. Come to this table where the broken are made whole. If we’re honest. Amen and Amen.

**By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**