

Scripture Reading:

Micha 6:1-8

Matthew 5: 1-12

Broken Light

Blessed are those who know they need God. Blessed are those who seek Christ. Blessed are those who are broken, for it is through our brokenness that we discover our need, our humility, our compassion, our grace. It is often our brokenness that produces our true beauty.

As I began to think about this truth I realized that this is an inherent trait of all the universe. For some reason the creator designed it that way. Last week I showed you the photo of a beautiful image of a star called “the hand of God.” And yet it wasn’t the star itself it was the explosion of the star that created such beauty and drew the world to take notice. As I began to think through other things that needed to be broken to be appreciated I suddenly realized the list is endless.

The first image Kayla and I came up with was a piñata (we considered having a big piñata in the middle of our worship that burst forth with all kinds of goodies, but we realized we didn’t really like the idea that we would beat something to get the goodness out - that’s not quite the direction I’m wanting us to take with one another). So we thought some more. What about the eggs many of us eat every day - they have to be broken to get the sustenance out. And many other fruits for that matter. Or what about how the glasses we use or gold rings we wear are made. Elements refined, melted, broken down, moulded all into use and beauty. We chop down trees to build houses and furniture, basically anything we consume, use or wear has been made useful or beautiful by being broken.

The image that we liked the best though was that of the crystal. It is through it being cut and broken that we see the most beautiful light and colours. Just like a rainbow the rain must be there to reflect the beauty of the sun.

It is the same for us. If we never have a struggle or a need, we are less likely to have compassion for those who do. If we feel the think that is our strength is our wealth or pride then we are more likely to judge those who don’t have it (not guaranteed but less likely). Now before we go any further I don’t want you to hear me preaching God want you to suffer, or God wants you to be broken. But I do want you to hear God longs for us to have a different worldview.

(if you have time check out this video, I found it interesting) <http://www.upworthy.com/take-two-normal-people-add-money-to-just-one-of-them-and-watch-what-happens-next?g=2&c=ufb2>

Rev. Jorge Lara-Braud puts it this way. "Let me invite you to consider with me a challenge to a life worth living. It is the challenge which Jesus of Nazareth gave to a multitude almost two thousand years ago. The challenge is called the Beatitudes. It comes from a famous sermon of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mountain.

Beatitude comes from the Latin word *beatitudo*, which means blessed, happy, or fortunate. Almost all of us recall the opening line of the passage: "Blessed are the poor in Spirit..." The idea is that if you live the way Jesus lays it out, you will be truly happy, truly fulfilled. But, as you know, the best things in life always demand the best we can be and the greatest effort we can put forth. The life of beatitude to which Jesus invites us demands no less.

Lara-Braud continues Let me take advantage of my native language, Spanish ... to get more deeply into the meaning of beatitude. In Spanish the word is translated *bienaventuranza*, literally "good adventure to you." We all know that adventure means risk, the courage to defy the odds, the refusal to play it safe.

Listen, then, to how the Beatitudes would sound if we turn them into *bienaventuranzas* and if we paraphrase a bit:

Good adventure to you whose hearts are genuinely with the poor: you are under God's protective rule. Good adventure to you who are without power: the whole world shall be yours. Good adventure to you who are hungry and thirsty for justice: your cup will be filled. Good adventure to you who look for truth with singleness of heart: you shall see God. Good adventure to you who work for peace: you shall be called children of God. Good adventure to you who are persecuted for the sake of justice. You, too, are already under God's protective rule; rejoice, be very happy, when others say evil things about you falsely because you are mine. God is preparing a great reward for you. Don't be surprised, prophets have always been an endangered species. (Trans. by J.L-B)¹

Few of us have taken the opportunity and adventure to live this way. Few choose to shine brightly in humility, compassion and justice first and for most. Most of us get caught up in the ways of pride and power. We can think of some who chose to live for love and justice over all and let's be honest for many there was a great cost. My mind goes to Martin Luther King Jr. and Oscar Romero and Mother Theresa and Nelson Mandella; blessed are those who chose the great adventure. Blessed are these who shine God's light for us still today.

"God knows, it is still a serious risk to be merciful, to keep one's heart pure, and to make peace with one's enemies. But the much greater risk is to confuse privilege and self-protection with the good life."

¹The Rev. Jorge Lara-Braud Oscar Romero: *Beatitude Made Flesh* Matthew 5:1-12
January 28, 1996

One question that began to run through my mind as I thought about being blessed in our brokenness was “What exactly does it mean to be blessed then?” Does it mean happy or fortunate? Or does it mean favour, or empowerment, or cherished? I am not entirely sure and so I am leaning towards the question David Lose asks “What does it feel like when you’re blessed?” Because although we are told who is blessed, a blessing isn’t something we can pursue. A blessing can only be received. A blessing is a gift.

To be blessed by God feels like you are not and will not be alone, like you will be accompanied wherever you go. “Being blessed feels like you have the capacity to rise above present circumstances, like you are more than the sum of your parts or past experiences. Being blessed feels like you have worth -- not because of something you did or might do, but simply because of who you are, simply because you deserve it.”²

And Jesus is making that exact point. Grace, love and blessing are given you because you are a child of God and you deserve it not because you have earned it. Lose writes “Jesus lived in a culture of honor and shame and he defied both cultural norms by offering blessing. We live, I’d suggest, in a culture of affirmation and blame, and need also to defy both by offering blessing.

Affirmation. *Lose continues* Have you noticed how often our children receive medals, ribbons, and trophies merely for “Participation” -- that is, for just showing up. One day a few years ago my kids returned home from an outing, each with a medal for participation in their hands. I couldn’t resist: “Do you know what you had to do to earn one of those when I was a kid?” I asked. “You had to WIN!” I answered, laughing so they would know that I meant no harm. But I needn’t have worried, for they laughed right along, as they had already come to learn that such awards mean next to nothing. Affirmation is nice, but often is empty.

And then there’s blame. This has become all but a national pastime -- it’s the politicians fault (or, if you are a politician, it’s the other party’s fault); it’s the official’s fault; it’s my teacher’s fault; it’s my parents’/children’s fault; and on and on and on. Blame is a way of discharging pain and disappointment without taking any responsibility.

Sometimes I think we’ve been taught to pursue happiness, settle for affirmation, and -- when neither of those work out -- relapse into blame. So in place of empty affirmation and corrosive blame, let’s substitute blessing: God’s unconditional regard for us, assurance to accompany us, power to help us persevere and flourish, and promise that we deserve love, honor, and respect. Blessing is something that can’t be pursued”³

Jesus names these people as blessed because rather than offering a way to the success our world honours Jesus is demonstrating that love and light are usually found in the most unlikely places. Not in the places where we look for it but in the places we would describe as weak and

² Lose, David workingpreacher.org

³ IBID

unworthy. We can't achieve wholeness and happiness through power, injustice and wealth, but we will feel the blessings of the kingdom if we live in humility and grace.

I also think that Jesus chooses these states or conditions to lift up because it's precisely in our moments of disappointment or despair that we are able to abandon cultural stereotypes about blessing (understood as happiness, wealth, fame, or power) and be open to the presence of God that gives without asking in return and blesses that we might be a blessing.

When we meet ourselves in brokenness and vulnerability, we are more likely to experience the power and presence of God mediated through the Christian community. And true blessing is found when we draw together as a family of God, seeing each other as God's beloved children, meeting each other at the points of our brokenness, and conveying to each other our and God's promises of regard, presence, accompaniment and, above all, worth. We are worthy of blessing, for God Almighty has created us and called us so.

So let us live out of our brokenness recognizing one another in the same light and offering God's blessings to one another. "Never look down on a struggle for life" instead offer care and love.

So on this journey let me say. Good adventure to you!

Amen.