

John 12:20-33  
March 21, 2021

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Amen.

I dropped a coffee mug some time ago. It broke into a dozen different shapes and sizes. Without thought, the broom and dustpan were out and quickly the pile of rubbish found its way into the trash container. The broken mug no longer had value or was of use to me. Often, that is the mindset we are accustomed to. Toss it out. Get a new one.

Yet, not everything that is broken must be discarded and often, what is broken might just become more beautiful than it was before. Many a year ago, I can remember watching one of those home improvement shows where they restore a dilapidated, old home. The interior designer was putting the finishing touches on things and decided to create a piece of art to display on one of the walls. Suddenly before her was a carton of old glass jars and bottles of many different colors, many which appeared to be broken or cracked already. She pulled them out one at a time and began gently hitting each one with a hammer so they would break into even smaller pieces. Once she had several hundred shards of glass, she methodically began to lay them out on a thin piece of plywood covered with some sort of adhesive. A blue piece here, a red piece there, a clear piece over there, a yellow piece next to that one. No, that yellow piece needed to be twisted a bit and that green piece had to be moved aside some. Finally, it was done and then she put another compound over it to fill in the cracks. When it was set and a frame was put around it, all those broken pieces now were a beautiful work of art to behold.

The Japanese have made an art out of restoring broken things. It is called Kintsugi or “golden joinery.”<sup>i</sup> It is an age-old custom in which something that is broken is joined together once again with melted gold or silver or platinum. Not only is the item once broken restored, the addition of a precious metal, has increased its value.

If my broken mug would have been able to be put back together again, I would have used super glue and done my best to fit the pieces together to eliminate the visibility of any cracks and hide the now perceived flaws in mug. Yet, Kintsugi does just the opposite. The addition of hot, liquid gold or other metal highlights the flaws in the mug, plate, piece of tile, bowl, pottery or whatever else it may have been that once was shattered. The once held story of the item remains intact and a new story begins of a beautiful piece of art of great value. (See image below)<sup>ii</sup>



I am broken. I know that all too well. Humanity is broken. The church we love (i.e., the body of Christ) is broken. Our cracks, crevices, scars, and flaws are always on display for the world to see even when we do our best to cover them up. Pretend they are not there masking our true selves and creating the allusion all is perfect. The marketplace has a plethora of products and services available to help us in doing so.

Like a mug dropped upon the floor, our lives at times are shattered by pain, loss, illness, hopelessness. Yet, we have a God who enters into and comes alongside that brokenness. Jesus says, "My soul is troubled." As John's prologue informs us, Jesus is the Word made flesh. He is God incarnate in a human being. God with us. As Jesus traverses toward the cross, perhaps in these words we catch a glimpse of

his body that will soon be broken by the agony of death. The scorn of becoming the scapegoat. The anguish of intolerance. These words reveal the eyes, heart, and soul of a loving God as Jesus stares in the face of his fate that lie ahead. Just as our souls are troubled by the ongoing brokenness of the world, so is God's soul troubled. Our Lord and Savior's soul is troubled. He takes upon himself the world's brokenness.

There is great comfort in these words, "My soul is troubled." "The all-powerful God is worried and troubled just as I am," one member of our Monday group stated. These words invoke in us a freedom to acknowledge our pain. Put voice to our hurts. Name our cracks and crevices. Lay bare before God those broken places and spaces in our lives and trust in a God who always works amidst brokenness.

This past year has brought so much change to our lives. It seems nothing is the same as it were one year ago pre-pandemic. Yet, there is one thing that has stayed the same and that is God and God's love, faithfulness, and presence. Relentlessly making Godself known. Bringing healing to the fractures and fissures of the world. Shining forth God's glory.

Jesus' soul is troubled; yet he, being fully God, is steadfast in his mission to free the world from the brokenness of sin and death. Rather than being spared from this hour (i.e., crucifixion), he says, "No." "No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father glorify your name." As we heard last week, Jesus' hour is when he is lifted high upon a cross, exalted before the world. This is the moment of his glorification. As blood flows from the wounds in his flesh. As his head drops to his chest and he takes his final breaths. It is in this broken body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that the world truly sees who he is. The Greeks, that represent the whole world that Jesus will draw to himself in his hour, come to Philip asking, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." We at times find ourselves asking a similar question in our journeys of faith. It seems John's answer is straight forward. If you want to see Jesus, look to the cross. Look to the Word made flesh's broken body. His blood poured out for you. For the sake of the world. There you will see a God who always works through brokenness. There you will see a God who loves the world. A God sent not to condemn the world, but to save the world.

We know the beauty that will come out of this brokenness. We know the completed portrait in which the light of resurrection hope dances, flickers, and shines off the once broken pieces of death. We know the great artist who makes all things new.

So, to all the broken-hearted. To all experiencing cracks of shame or guilt. To all who at times feel as broken crayons cast aside in favor of new ones. To all the scars, wounds, and perceived flaws that adorn our bodies. Remember, God sees you. God knows each one of those cracks. God is aware of the story behind each scar. There is a post-it note hanging at eye-level just above my laptop in my office. I do not recall where I heard it, but it has always stuck with me. It states, “God fills the cracks allowing the light to get in.” Like precious gold, silver or platinum, the light, which is more precious than any amount of physical substance, is that which soothes our wounds, heals our hurts, and binds us together in the arms of a loving God. When we utter words such as, “My soul is troubled,” know we do not speak them alone. They are accompanied by the same words our Lord and Savior uttered. They are words that are always followed by the promise that God’s glory will have the last word.

You are beautiful, beloved and precious sons and daughters of the living God. Just as you are – scars, wounds, cracks, crevices, and broken pieces. May the light of Christ forever shine into those cracks writing in your hearts the story of God’s love, faithfulness, and beauty. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Debbie McDaniel; “Finding Beauty in Brokenness: Christ Came to Heal and Redeem”; <https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/debbie-mcdaniel/for-those-who-feel-broken-theres-hope-still-ahead.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.



