

*Sermon Series: Life in Christ: Chosen, Blessed, Broken, and Given*

*Sermon Title: Broken*

*Psalm 22: 1-10; John 18:15-18; 25-27; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18*

*Salem United Methodist Church; May 22, 2016*

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As Christians we are to have a Life in Christ, but what does a Life in Christ look like? This sermon series has been exploring different aspects of a Life in Christ. The first week we discovered that each person, as a creation of God, is chosen. Being chosen does not mean that some are chosen while others are rejected. Being chosen means Christ sees each person as being precious and having unique God-given qualities. Last week we learned that by our chosenness, we are blessed by God and that we are called to be a blessing to others. Today we will look at our brokenness and how a Life in Christ can actually embrace our brokenness.

Something that is broken literally means that it is separated into parts or pieces by being hit or damaged, like bones, windows, mirrors, glasses, hearts, spirits, etc. Or something that is broken can be something that does not work properly, like any electronic devices. Or something that is broken can be something that is not kept or honored like vows and covenants. When one is not honored there is a break down in relationships. We tend to throw broken or damaged things away, especially if they can't be fixed with super glue or duct tape. What about broken hearts, spirits, lives, promises, covenants, relationships, marriages, families, communities, nations, and a broken world? When relationships break down, we tend to want to walk away rather than find a way to restore, reconcile, or mend the relationship. Our world is filled with people who have broken hearts, broken spirits, and broken relationships.

Broken people can often relate to the words from Psalm 22. "My God! My God, why have you left me all alone? Why are you so far from saving me—so far from my anguished groans? My God, I cry out during the day, but you don't answer; even at nighttime I don't stop." Broken people feel abandoned. They are alone. No matter how loud they cry out or act out, we tend to ignore them because it is too painful for us. It's easier to toss them aside and abandon them. Sometimes broken people choose to be alone. They don't want anyone to reach out to them. They feel that there is no hope in putting the pieces back together again, like Humpty Dumpty. Even the king's horses couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again. Broken people feel rejected, ignored, despised, useless, worthless, unappreciated, and unloved. They feel like their world is falling apart.

Peter must have felt that his world was falling apart on the night of Jesus' arrest. His world revolved around Jesus. Peter left a fishing career to follow Jesus. He had confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ. Out of all the disciples, Peter was the one who trusted enough to step out of the boat and walk toward Jesus. That night Peter had the courage to follow the guards who took Jesus to the courtyard of the high priest. He was hoping to gather information about Jesus. The other disciples hid. But Jesus knew Peter and predicted that he would deny him. So when Peter is asked if he knows Jesus, even though Jesus has been the center of his world, Peter does not have the courage to admit that is a follower of Jesus, nor does he tell the people all about how great Jesus is. Peter denies Jesus not once but three times. Not only is Peter's world shattered by Jesus' arrest, his heart and spirit are broken when he realizes that he has rejected the One who rocked his world. Can you imagine what Peter must have felt like not only in the moment, but the next day when Jesus was crucified? Sadness, grief, and depression don't even begin to describe the lowliness and loneliness he must have felt. What does Peter do with all of this? He goes back to what he knows, his former way of life-fishing. This is where the Resurrected Christ finds him and puts the pieces of Peter back together again. The broken Peter is not thrown away, but made better than new.

The Bible is filled with stories of broken people and broken hearts. The leaders and prophets of Israel were all broken. God chose them and blessed them in their brokenness. Jesus touched and healed people who were broken physically, spiritually, and mentally. Jesus even allowed himself to be broken so we could receive healing. We remember this in our communion liturgy, "This is my body broken for you."

All of us are broken in one way or another. One of the beauties of being the church is that we are a hospital for broken people. We come with the shattered pieces of our lives, our pain, our suffering, our grief, our loneliness, our broken spirits, our broken hearts, our damaged lives here to a church community that is as broken as the individuals in it, seeking the glue that fixes, the salve that relieves us of the pain, the tape that holds us together. When we meet we become aware of each other's brokenness and we know that even though our brokenness is different, we are not alone. We have each other and we have God. God chose us even though we are broken. God blesses us even though we are broken. Our brokenness is who we are. Each person's brokenness is unique and individual. No two people experience the same brokenness. We can compare our

brokenness. We can listen to each other's brokenness, but even though our brokenness is similar, each of us suffers differently. When we are the church, we help each other respond to our brokenness.

Here are two ways in which I have witnessed the church responding to another's brokenness. First is to face our brokenness. Some people live life by ignoring their brokenness. They are bleeding through the cracks. Everyone around them sees it but themselves. Some people will anesthetize their pain with alcohol, drugs, food, gambling, and/or sex. When we are in pain we can use anger to inflict pain on another. We think, "If I am hurting than you have to feel my pain, too." Some will use control as a mask to hide our brokenness. Because if we are not in control of our life, we just might have to admit we are broken and we will fall to pieces. All of these are ways we run away from our brokenness. The first step to healing is to step into our brokenness. Henri Nouwen wrote in his book, *The Life of the Beloved*, "We have to find the courage to embrace our own brokenness, to make our most feared enemy into a friend, and claim it as a companion." We would rather experience and befriend the agony of rejection, separation, neglect, and/or abuse rather than face it. When we are church to one another, we witness to each other how to befriend our brokenness. We see others who in the midst of their despair and pain live in joy and hope. We see others trusting in God through all their brokenness, surrendering to it and allowing God to give their broken lives meaning and purpose. We witness how there is treasure in our cracked clay pots which were chosen and blessed by God. We rely on the power of God to reach out to us so we won't be crushed when we are in trouble. We witness how the death of Jesus can restore and offer us new life in the midst of brokenness. Our pain and suffering does not need to be an obstacle to joy and peace, but a means to it. The community of the Trinity offers to us a community of healing in the midst of our brokenness.

The second way that I see the church respond to another's brokenness is by allowing God to bless it. Last week we talked about allowing ourselves to be cursed and listening to the voices that make us feel unwanted, unworthy, useless. Living in brokenness reinforces cursedness. Befriending our brokenness allows God to bless it. When we live in cursedness, we ask, "Why me?" When we live in blessedness, we ask, "Why not me?" This is not easy and it is a process, but when we have the community of faith to rely upon, to offer supporting arms, we can step out of the darkness of cursedness into the light of being blessed. Great burdens can be made lighter. What seems impossible becomes a challenge. Rejection can be turned into a deeper communion with God. Being the church is holding the light in the darkness for someone to see how brokenness can become a blessing. Being the church is being a channel of healing to others. Being the church is allowing the Life of Christ to be at work in us.

Years ago I heard this story about a two cracked pots. It blessed my brokenness and transformed me. I would like to share it with you. Two clay pots were used to carry water from the river to the household. A water bearer hung each on the end of a pole which he carried it across the back of his neck. One of the pots was cracked while the other was perfect. Day after day by the time the water bearer got to the house one pot was full of water while the cracked pot was half empty. The water in the cracked pot had leaked out through its cracks. The cracked pot was ashamed that it couldn't bring back a full pot of water. It felt useless and no good. The water bearer asked the cracked pot why it was feeling ashamed. The cracked pot replied that it was only able to deliver half a pot of water and not the full amount. The water bearer smiled and said to the pot, "When we return from the river, I want you to look on the ground." So on the return trip from the river, the cracked pot looked on the ground. The water bearer asked, "Are you noticing the flowers growing only on your side of the path and not on the other pot's side? That's because I knew about your flaw and wanted to make use of it. Two years ago I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walked back from the stream the water flowing out of your crack watered them. Today there are beautiful flowers growing because of your water. After I deliver the water, I come back and pick these flowers for the master so they can grace his table with beauty.

We are all cracked pots. "God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grains to give bread, broken bread to give strength" written by Vance Havner. We are all broken, but if we allow the Triune God who has already chosen us in our brokenness, we, too, can be blessed and God can create beauty despite all our cracks.

**Reflection Questions:** How is God blessing your brokenness? Who do you know is suffering with a type of brokenness? Where is there brokenness in our communities? How can Salem respond to this brokenness?

**Resources:** *Life of the Beloved* by Henri Nouwen; "The Cracked Water Pot," <http://www.sacinandanaswami.com/en/s1a38/wisdom-stories/the-cracked-water-pot.html>

