

Living Redeemed
1 Corinthians 1:17-18; 1 John 4:18-21
21 January 2018
Everton Hills

Dangerous.

That's what my plate looked like last Sunday when I smashed it in front of the children. Despite some thinking that the only reason why I smashed it while in a plastic bag was to save the time of cleaning up, I know from painful experience how easily China cuts flesh!

If you've ever been bare foot and broken a glass or a plate on the kitchen floor, what is the first thing you do? Stand still. You know what that ugly, serrated broken plate can do to unprotected flesh.

And in many respects that's what we do when we come across broken people.

We stand still, scared of what might happen.

Will something bad happen?

Will someone I love get hurt?

Can they be trusted?

Will scars be left behind?

As I share my last message with you as a Pastor of Prince of Peace, I want you to remember the key word I spoke about last week. The word was Redeemed. The Christian message, the Gospel message, Christ's message, is always about redeeming that which is broken, so that it can be useful once more..

Take a quick glance through the bible as to the sorts of people that God used.

- Abraham thought that he was too old to be of use.
- Elijah was suicidal
- Joseph was a victim of bullying and domestic abuse.
- Job was bankrupt.
- Moses had difficulty stringing two words together.
- Gideon was a coward
- Samson was a womanizer
- Rahab a prostitute.
- The woman at the well was known for constantly living with the pain of broken relationships.
- Noah was a drunkard
- Jacob was a liar and a cheat.
- David a murderer and adulterer
- Martha lived with constant anxiety

...the list could go on! But what you need to realise, is that God used each of these people in their brokenness to transform the lives of others. He did not necessarily restore them first. Rather HE restored them through their brokenness and redeemed them to be people of significance!

That is so foreign to our way of thinking!

How you look, how you sound, how you smell... your morality or lack there of, are not determining factors of whether God might call you, use you... He calls those who are broken, so that they, in their brokenness, can encounter his grace. He redeems those moments when we feel shattered and broken, when we feel like shards of china on the kitchen floor, those moments when we think that no one could love us or care for us or even want to be with us, those times when we feel overwhelmed by the depth of

our sins. He redeems those moments and transforms them into something that are beautiful and new and fresh.

Last Sunday, when I broke that plate, I used it to share the Japanese concept of **Kintsugi**. That is the concept of acknowledging that breakage and repair is part of an object or a person's history.

This was my plate.

This is my plate now.

And now that it is restored, it is a lot more usable than what it was!

You know, it can be scary to step into those situations... where we know that pain and hurt is right before us.

Last Tuesday I led a college staff retreat. As part of that retreat I led the staff to choose a picture that had some spiritual meaning to them. There were lots of good pictures. And lots of really good reasons as to why a particular picture was chosen.

Then at the end of that session, I told them to tear the picture up.

One staff member came to me in protest. Whatever was happening in their life at this point of time, this picture held incredible significance... and to be asked to tear it up was like being asked to walk across the kitchen floor covered with shards of broken glass. She begged not to have to do it.

Now I am compassionate... and I said to her "Of course you have to do it... but, at the end of the day, I have the originals and I can print you up a new one – if you still want it."

It was so difficult for her to tear it up. Later she shared with me that tears were welling in her eyes with each tear.

And that is what it is like sometimes. As we notice life, as we notice the good stuff, and even the not so good, we sometimes become hesitant to change, to embrace that which is different, to try something new, to love someone different... because we are afraid that what we had will never be the same. We end up holding on to stuff, and situations, and beliefs about ourselves, about others, and about God. We fail to remember that God works through our brokenness, works through our chaos, and he works through us in order to create life and hope and transformation.

And that is what I want you to know today. The apostle Paul describes this the power of the Cross.

"Christ... sent me to preach the good news. He commanded me not to use the kind of wisdom that people commonly use. That would take all the power away from the cross of Christ. The message of the cross seems foolish to those who are lost and dying. But it is God's power to us who are being saved." 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, NIRV

In other words, while we might look for things that are perfect, faultless, confident and complete, the power of the Cross transforms the broken, the damaged, the hurting, those filled with doubt, those worried and anxious about the future, those that have been gutted by the weight of their sin... and transforms them. The cross redeems them and their situation.

The cross redeems us, so that we may live redeemed.

What does that mean? To live redeemed is to live aware of our own deficiencies and failings, and then drawing on those deficiencies and failings, love and accept ourselves, each other and those who have not yet encountered the amazing Grace of God.

The reality is, we can only love, when we know we are loved.

That's what the apostle John said when he wrote...

There is no fear in love. Instead, perfect love drives fear away. Fear has to do with being punished. The one who fears does not have perfect love. We love because he loved us first.... Here is the command God has given us. Anyone who loves God must also love his brothers and sisters. (1 John 4:18-19, 21, NIV)

Do you want to live redemptively? Do you want to really learn how to love... begin, and constantly return to an awareness of God's love for you. Continue to draw on that reality... because it is only as we live in our redemption, that we are who we are meant to be – restored cracked pots who **live and share the grace of God SO THAT our communities can experience His transforming love and peace.**

Where have you heard that?

It's our mission statement.

Live the grace of God

Share the grace

SO all who we meet

Can experience God's transforming love and peace.

If there was one thing that I could leave you with, that would burn into your memories, it is this... know how much God loves you, so that you can love others.

Because that's how Jesus lived. Through prayer, living in the Word, and living the Word, through living in a faith community, he engaged a broken and corrupt world, and entered the dangerous place of vulnerable compassion.

And that is his invitation to us.

When Jesus says,

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.” John 13:34, NLT

Jesus was inviting us to engage with the world so that the world could truly live.

And to do that, we must engage with the broken and hurting people around us. We need to be a community where broken people are welcome. And we do that, by living redemptively.

Don't be afraid of the broken plate on the kitchen floor.

God is a redemptive God

Trust Him.

Live redemptively, so that others can experience his love as well.

Now for those of you who want to know what happened to that staff member as she tore her picture up, as the tears welled in her eyes, as what she thought was her hope and her dream shattered?

At the end of the day, I invited the staff to glue their pictures back together on a piece of paper which simply had the phrase **“I am Redeemed! My scars have been made beautiful through Christ,”** and then bring it to me to be laminated.

As she returned it to me I asked her whether she wanted a new image, an undamaged image. Her response was a resounding NO! She could now see how God himself had transforms her fear into his glory.