

SERIES: Broken

“Mending a Broken Spirit” – Luke 7:36-50

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. And all the king’s horses, and all the king’s men -- ? (couldn’t put Humpty together again!)

Humpty’s broken. He’s fallen and he can’t get up. Like the TV commercial: “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!!” Do you ever feel broken? Broken – like things in your life are out of joint, or like there’s something about you so flawed, so out of whack, that you don’t know if you can ever get it back “in whack” again. What do you do with your brokenness?

Have you ever wondered if the little poem “Humpty Dumpty” was meant to express a deeper truth? Once Humpty Dumpty fell, it was all over – there was no power great enough to save him, no one to put back the pieces. Is that true for all of us too? I hope not!!

What are we to do with our brokenness? The short answer is: Take your brokenness to Jesus. God loves people who have failed and messed up, and there’s nothing he wants to do more than extend forgiveness for sin, and healing for brokenness. And the greater your brokenness, the greater God’s opportunity to demonstrate his grace!

Our text today is the account on the sinful woman anointing Jesus’ feet in Luke 7.

- V. 36 – “One of the Pharisees” - part of a religious group that carefully observed all of the written, and oral, Jewish laws. Many of them had developed a smugness about their moral superiority over other people in Jesus’ day. Q: So, what was this man’s true motive for inviting Jesus to his home?
- V. 37-38 – No name given to the woman who entered – just a “woman of the city, who was a sinner...” She came in uninvited. She was pressing her luck to go in there. But, she was prepared - already had a beautiful jar of expensive perfume, and knew what she wanted to do with it.
- V. 39 – In verse 39 we now we know the Pharisee’s true motive: he was testing Jesus. His prideful, works-based religion said God would want nothing to do with sinners.
- V. 40-43 – Jesus could read his mind! He led Simon into a story where Simon agreed that those who had larger debts forgiven, would show more love in return.
- V. 44-48 – Common courtesies in that day: wash dusty feet; a kiss of greeting (even men!); oil for the hair. The sinful woman showed her respect and love and her need to repent and be forgiven. Simon’s lack of courtesy proves his lack of love for Jesus, and his unseen need to repent and be forgiven.
- V. 49 – You would have thought these religious men would be happy and accepting of Jesus and the woman. Instead, they are critical. (Refer to Luke 15, and the Parable of the Lost Son? These guys are like the hostile “older brother.”) Sometimes church people can get that way over time. Christ-Followers: Please guard yourself and avoid this kind of thinking, that you are better than most because of who you are or what you have done!

- V. 50 – Q: How are we saved? How is our brokenness healed? By keeping all the rules and regulations? By being super religious all the time? No. Jesus says, “Your FAITH has saved you.” Faith in Jesus. Only He can be your Forgiver. Only He came as your redeemer and took your place on the cross. Only He died for your sins, once and for all! Only He can be your Leader, your Lord, your Savior. Faith. The result? You can go in peace, knowing you have been forgiven. Your broken life is healed. Instead of hopeless and broken, He brings you peace and hope. That’s what only Jesus can do.

Let’s recap:

- Simon, the Pharisee, was proud. Jesus could do little for him. He had his rules and his religion, he was probably very well-off, and he felt that he didn’t need Jesus.
- The woman was humble and broken. She lavishly demonstrated her love and respect for Jesus. Q: Have you brought your “anointing oil” to Jesus? Have you poured out your heart at the Master’s feet?
- When we respond in love and gratitude to Jesus, he is able to give forgiveness, healing, and peace.

Broken Vessels Wanted! A Poem by David Robb (Inspired at NF 2008)

My tears of weeping are pleasing to the Lord. My cries of emptiness are a song to His heart. He is pleased with me when I am broken, because what He desires most of me is a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

He desires that of me because, with a broken vessel, He is assured that I will always be empty enough for him to pour into, to fill over and over again. And what He pours into a broken vessel must be released to others around it. There is no avoiding that fact.

...when there is no more need, nor emptiness, the pouring stops. (But) as long as there is need; as long as there is room in the urn, there is oil pouring; pouring from Him. That’s why He over-joys with broken vessel. It’s why He wants you ‘imperfect,’ because that is the fount of His filling. He cannot fill perfect jars, they are not able to receive because they are already filled with His old pouring or they’ve replaced His oil with soil, to be used as a floral decoration, no longer useful for His intended purpose. It’s why He told his disciples, “the perfect do not need a physician, and it’s the broken that need me.” The perfect vessel cannot receive what I have. Worse, yet, is that if poured into, that vessel would never leak oil to those around it. It would be held in safety, to be used to its own advantage.

It wasn’t the stature of a religious man hosting Jesus in his home, but the tears of a prostitute at his feet weeping tears of worship that caused the host of heaven to rejoice! It was not the self-satisfied people that stirred the Master’s heart most, but a broken vessel of perfume by one who had been filled up with mercy and forgiveness and who thought it a small thing to give so lavishly in worship to Him.

He desires the broken vessel, because He is able to attend to that one over and over and over again; not as a burden to Him, but a daily communion. And as the jar stands drained, its ebb low, its then that the sweetness of heaven flows to fill it again. It is a useful vessel, marred and fractured, to dispense the oil of heaven to those who most need it;

...to be emptied...to return again to be filled. Broken Vessels wanted!

Like Humpty Dumpty - You've fallen and you can't get up. Only God can lift you up. You're broken and you can't be fixed. Only your Creator has the power to fix you. And your creator – God – through Christ – has set up the church to be the place where he does all these things. He will use other Christians to help heal your brokenness, and he will use you to help heal the brokenness of others.

If you're here today and are a spiritual seeker – you're not a Christian but are wondering what all this is about – I just want you to leave with the story of this sinful woman firmly in your mind. THAT'S who God is. God loves people who have failed and messed up, and there's nothing he wants to do more than extend forgiveness for sin, and healing for brokenness. And the greater your brokenness, the greater God's opportunity to demonstrate his grace!

Let us pray.

God you are worthy of our worship. Thank you for hearing our prayers. Thank you for reaching out to us, for healing our wounds of sin and insecurity and jealousy and pettiness, and all the other wounds we suffer and inflict on others. Thank you for how open and accepting you are, that all we have to do is be willing to admit our need for you, and you are right there eager to receive us, and take us forward. May we each accept the two aspects of your healing: to take our brokenness to you, and be healed, and to take your healing also to others. Be at work in our lives and in our church this day. Thank you for your lavish love for us. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.