

3.22.26 – 5th Sunday of Lent *From the Inside Out: BREAKING OPEN*

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As we continue our Lenten journey *From the Inside Out*,
we come to a turning point in the story of Jesus from John's Gospel
as he journeys ever closer to the cross and the events of Holy Week.

Up until now, Jesus has been teaching, healing, and gathering followers.

But in this moment From today's reading, something shifts.

Some people come looking for Jesus—
and it signals that everything is about to change.

Jesus begins to speak not just about **his life**...

but about what it means to truly follow him.

And he does it using an image we might not expect.

So let us listen now from the Word of God from John 12:20-33,

as Eugene Peterson paraphrases it in *The Message*.

A Grain of Wheat Must Die

There were some Greeks in town who had come up to worship at the Feast. They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee: "Sir, we want to see Jesus. Can you help us?"

Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip together told Jesus. Jesus answered, "Time's up. The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. "Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.

"If any of you wants to serve me, then follow me. Then you'll be where I am, ready to serve at a moment's notice. The Father will honor and reward anyone who serves me. Right now I am shaken. And what am I going to say? 'Father, get me out of this'? No, this is why I came in the first place. I'll say, 'Father, put your glory on display.'"

Then a voice came out of the sky-I have glorified it, & I'll glorify it again. The listening crowd said, "Thunder!" Others said, "An angel spoke to him!"

Jesus said, "The voice didn't come for me but for you. At this moment the world is in crisis. Now Satan, the ruler of this world, will be thrown out.

And I, as I am lifted up from the earth, will attract everyone to me and gather them around me." He put it this way to show how he was going to be put to death.

*This is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Jesus had a way of answering questions...without really answering them.
Some people come looking for him. They say, 'Sir, we want to see Jesus.'
And instead of saying, 'Great, here I am,' Jesus starts talking about seeds.

- Not strategy.
- Not success.
- Not how to grow a movement. Nope. Seeds.

And if we're honest... it's a strange response.

Because when someone says, 'We want to see you,' you don't usually start talking about something being buried in the ground.

But Jesus knows something we often forget:

**The deepest truths about life are not explained—
they are grown. They're Grown...**

And so he gives them—and us—an image:

A grain of wheat. A seed.
Something small. Ordinary.

Now...just think about a seed. From the outside it looks whole.
Complete. Contained. Safe.

But a seed can remain a seed forever if it stays on the shelf. Right?
Nothing grows. Nothing multiplies. Nothing changes.

The miracle only begins when the seed is placed in the soil.
When it disappears into darkness.
When the outer shell begins to crack. (pause)
And what looks like destruction is actually transformation.
The seed must break open for the life inside it to emerge.

Remember Jesus says:

'Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground... it remains just a grain.
But if it is buried... it sprouts. It grows. It multiplies.'

And when it does—what comes out is far greater than what went in.
One seed becomes a plant.
A plant becomes many seeds.
Life multiplies.

And suddenly we realize—
He's not really talking about seeds.
He's talking about us.

Jesus is describing the strange mathematics of the kingdom of God.
Life comes through release.
Growth comes through surrender.
Fruit comes through transformation.

And the life God is growing in you and me, will eventually...

I dare say always, require something to **break open**.

It's gonna happen. It's supposed to happen.

And isn't this is exactly the journey we have been on this Lent?

Week by week God has been working on us **from the inside out**.

We have:

- Taken off the masks.
- Told the truth.
- Named our thirst.
- Sat with grief we cannot fix.

All of that inner work Has been preparing us for this moment.

Because eventually, faith asks something of us.

And if we're honest, this is where it gets real.

Because breaking open doesn't feel spiritual.

It feels vulnerable, maybe even painful.

It feels like letting go of something we've been holding on to
for a long time.

But I believe that faith-filled, Spirit driven breaking open

is a transformational moment... held in the tension between
what has been... and what is not yet visible.

And that space can feel scary.

Even for Jesus.

Jesus says something striking in vs 27:

The NRSV translates: "Now my soul is troubled."

And *The Message* puts it this way:

"Right now I am shaken." *Pause.*

I want to let that land...

Because we often imagine Jesus moving toward the cross

Throughout Lent with calm certainty.

But that's not what we see here.

We see honesty.

We see struggle.

We see the weight of what lies ahead.

Friends, this is not a small moment. Jesus knows what is coming.
The betrayal. The suffering. The cross.

And he doesn't pretend it's easy.

~He doesn't spiritualize it.

~He doesn't minimize it.

~He names it: "I am troubled...shaken in my soul."

The Greek word Jesus uses here "tarass^o"—

means more than just troubled or concerned.

It means shaken. Disturbed. Like waves churning in a storm.

Jesus is not calm on the inside in this moment...in his soul.

~He is honest...he is vulnerable...

~He is feeling the weight of what is coming.

And that matters...

Because it means courage doesn't come from not feeling fear...

It comes from trusting God in the middle of it.

Oh friends, this is so important for us to hear—

~Courage is not the absence of fear.

~Courage is not feeling strong.

~Courage is not having it all figured out.

~Courage is choosing to trust God...

in the middle of what feels uncertain, overwhelming, or scary.

Because if we're honest...This is where we live.

We know what it feels like to be storm-tossed, troubled & shaken...

-When the diagnosis comes.

-When the future feels unclear.

-When endless news cycles of war, violence & injustice consume us.

-When a decision weighs so heavy.

-When we're asked to let go of something we've held tightly.

We may not say it out loud...

But inside we feel it:

"I don't know if I can do this."

"I don't know what's coming next."

"I don't know how this will turn out."

And yet... listen to what Jesus does next.

He says: “What should I say—‘Father, get me out of this’?

NO... this is why I came.” THAT...that is courage. Not the absence of struggle.

But the willingness to stay. To trust. To move forward in love even when the path is costly.

And because Jesus had the courage to walk that path... The seed did break open.

And life did come. It came abundantly...it still comes!

So I think here is a key question this passage places before us.

Where in your life...in my life...

might God be inviting something to break open?

Maybe it is:

~A grudge that has been held too long.

~A fear that has kept you from trusting.

~An identity you have outgrown.

~A calling you have been avoiding.

~A step of faith that feels so risky.

Seeds do not sprout without surrender.

When the outer shell begins to crack, what looks like destruction...

is actually transformation.

The seed must break open for the life inside it to emerge.

But when it does...Life grows...life multiplies.

Jesus knows what lies ahead. The cross is coming.

But he also knows what lies beyond it.

So hear the good news, friends...

The seed that breaks open...is not lost.

The life that feels uncertain...is not wasted.

The place where you feel stretched, unsettled, even storm-tossed...

may be the very place

where God is bringing something new to life.

Because this is the promise at the heart of our faith:

~God does not waste the breaking open.

~God uses it. Again... and again... and again.

From the inside out,

God is growing something in you.

And what feels like breaking...

may actually be the beginning.

The beginning of:

~New life.

~New courage.

~New hope.

So don't be afraid of the breaking open.

Trust it.

Because in God's hands...

every seed that falls

is already on its way

to new life. Amen and Amen.