

That was my bad. Okay. All right. So how do you go from here? All right, let's just do this.

What if. What if the broken places in our lives, the ones we try to hide, what if they are actually the places that God wants to use the Most? So in 15th century Japan, there was a ruler named Ashikaga Yoshimasa. That's how you say it, right? I mean, look at him.

Okay, so anyway, this guy, I think he was weird because he had a bowl. A bowl. That was his favorite thing. He loved that bowl. And one day, somebody dropped it, and it broke into a whole bunch of pieces.

And so he was devastated. I don't know what happened to the person who dropped it, but he decided that he would take the pieces and ship it back to China, because it was imported from China. And he sent a note saying, can you please put this back together and try to fix it for me? He waited weeks and weeks and weeks.

And then it finally came back, and he opened the box, and he was pretty disappointed because it had been repaired, but it was ugly. It was effective, but unsightly. So Ashikaga decided that he would turn to his local craftsman there in Japan and say, can you. Can you do better? Can you fix this?

And so they took it. And a few weeks later, they came back and they presented the bowl to him. And he was stunned, absolutely stunned by the beauty of it. Because instead of hiding the cracks and points of fracture, they highlighted them. They took a lacquer or glue and infused it with gold and used that to put the pieces back together.

And so the broken places actually became a part of the story. They were transformed for all to see. This is the beginning of an art form called Kintsuke. And I think we have a few photos. Kintsuke literally means golden joinery.

And it's just beautiful. I would love to have a piece, but I can't afford one because I think it's very expensive. So, kintsuki, this Japanese art form became closely associated with the Japanese philosophy called wabi sabi. That's the way you have to say it, wabi sabi. And so the idea is that beauty is found in imperfection.

It's found in change. It's found in age and simplicity. And so instead of pretending an object was never broken, kintsuki and wabi sabi honor the brokenness that's been repaired. And so the brokenness, the simplicity, the change, the age just becomes something that's beautiful because it's something new. So the beauty of this art form, kintsuke is not just that something was broken and repaired.

The beauty is that the brokenness is transformed into something new, something beautiful. The cracks, the fractures, are not merely fixed.

They become a part of a new story.

This is my observation as an old man and been in ministry for a long, long time. Many of us spend our lives trying to hide our fractures, trying to hide our broken places. We want to hide our failures. We want to hide our addictions. We want to hide our shame.

We want to hide the parts of our stories that we wish weren't a part of our story. And so we work hard to appear stronger and better and more put together than we really are.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of Jesus, invites us to something different.

God simply doesn't cover over our brokenness. He takes it. He takes what we surrender to him and he remakes it. And in doing so, he gives us three gifts. He gives us a new identity, a new story, and a new life.

And what Kintsuke does for broken pottery, God does for people. And so he does more than that. Kintsuke just transforms a bowl. God transforms a life. And this is what Paul, I think, is getting at.

In Second Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 16 through 21, there he describes what it means to be made new in Christ, to be a new creation, and how God is actively reconciling the world to Himself. And we join him in that. As we become new creations as a part of his story, we join him in his mission of bringing more people to Him. And that's important because many of us live by this false formula we looked at a few weeks ago, that my value and my worth is based on what I do and what you think of me. That's a terrible way to live.

Because when we live that way, if we live based on what we do and what other people think, then you know what we do. We tend to hide our failures. We hide our imperfections. We hide our insecurities. We fake it till we hope we make it.

Paul says, listen, listen. That's not a way to live. And he says, when we are in Christ, we are not defined by by our performance, and we're not defined by what we try to hide. Instead, our brokenness is redeemed by the golden seams of God's grace. His redemptive work in our lives becomes a means of us joining him in this ministry of reconciliation, bringing people into a relationship with Him.

This becomes our identity, it becomes our purpose, and it becomes our mission in life. Second Corinthians is A great letter. It's one of the most personal letters that Paul wrote. His relationship with the Corinthian church is complicated, to use modern terms. He started that church.

You can read about it in Acts 18. And he's had this back and forth relationship with them. He loves them, but they keep frustrating him with their immorality and their worldliness, and they just don't get it sometimes. And now this letter has been precipitated in part because somebody's saying, you know what? I don't think Paul's.

I don't think he's real. I don't think he's really called by God, because look at him. He's weak.

He's not all that strong. He's not eloquent. And so they're trying to measure his authority and his ministry by worldly standards. And they're saying he doesn't stand back up. This is.

Some people in the church are saying that in Corinth, strength and status and eloquence of speech and image and outward appearances, that that's what really mattered. Weakness was something to hide. Brokenness was something to conceal and not reveal. Paul says, look, the kingdom of God works differently. And he says very clearly, God's power shines most brightly in our weaknesses.

You read 2 Corinthians 12, where he says, and he hears Jesus say, my power is made perfect in weakness. And Paul says, you know what? I embrace that because when I am weak, then I am strong. And in second Corinthians 4, he talks about being a jar of clay, that we are jars of clay, fragile, chipped and broken. And yet in these jars of clay, God has chosen to place his treasure.

He's chosen to put his love in these jars of clay. Because the love shines out through the places of fracture. It shines through our flaws is what he's saying. And then Beginning in chapter five, verse 11, Paul explains why he embraces Solomon suffering, why he embraces brokenness. And he says, it's Christ's love.

He said, I just can't get over it. The love of Christ compels me. It just drives me. I just am staggered when I consider how much God loves me and how much he loves you. And he says, you want to know?

You want to know how I know this? I look at the cross, he said, I can't. I just can't believe. It's hard to believe that someone would die for me. And yet that's what Jesus does.

Does. And so he looks at that. He says, Jesus died to take away our sins. Even when we didn't care, even when we didn't know, even when we were actively enemies of his, he still did it. He had to do so.

Paul says he had to do so because of our sins, because he wanted us to be in a relationship with him. He had to do that. But he was glad to do it. He was glad to do it. Tim Keller says it this way, talking to me.

He says, you are so flawed that Jesus had to die for you, yet so loved that he was glad to die for you. Paul says, this changes everything. This changes everything. I want everyone to experience the salvation that Jesus provides. I want everyone to experience the resurrection from the dead.

Just as Jesus rose from the dead. Because of Christ's love, because of his death, burial and resurrection, new life, new life is possible.

Most people, I think, think that Christianity is about becoming a better version of yourself, just improving yourself. Paul says something more radical. He says that in Christ God is making you a new creation, something new. Listen to Second Corinthians 5, verse 16 through 21. So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do know we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

God made him Jesus, who had no sin, who was perfect. God made him, who had no sin, to be sin for us, to be a sin offering to take my sins and yours to be sin for us so, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Wow. You can see why Paul is like, this is staggering stuff. You know, again, most people think Christianity is about improving and behavior modification. Paul says it's not about behavior modification. It's about heart transformation.

It's about a new identity. The death and resurrection of Jesus provide a new way of looking at life. We do not define and measure success as the world does. Rather, success, true success, is being reconciled to God. It doesn't matter what you do or who you are.

If you're reconciled to God, then you are successful. And being reconciled to God just means we're being brought back into A right relationship with him through Jesus, our sins separate us from God. God is wholly perfect. We can't be in his sight with sin. And Jesus says, I will take your sin and I will allow you to be reconciled with God.

So Jesus takes the sins and allows us to become the righteousness of God, which just means that we are right with God in every way. I think the question that I have for a lot of us and for myself is, do you really believe that?

Do you believe it? Do you believe that as broken people with our flaws and our faults, our fractures and our fallen tendencies to sin, do you really believe we're still the righteousness of God? Meaning that we're right with Him? Meaning that when he looks at me tomorrow, he sees me as holy, perfect and blameless. You believe that?

That's what the Gospel is. Paul in Galatians 3:26 says, by faith we are baptized into Christ, meaning we reenact his death, burial and resurrection. And he says, when we're baptized into Christ, we are clothed with Christ. It's like putting on coveralls, I guess, that cover up the way we are. And when God sees us, he sees His Son.

And he sees perfection, he sees holiness, he sees blamelessness. And that's how we relate to Him. God gives us and declares that we are righteous. And he says, now you are my child. You are my child.

Now we know below what he sees. I'm still me. And I'm still. I don't know about you, but I'm still. I still don't have it all right?

I still have a lot of struggles. And so this is where God gives us his spirit. He says, listen, I'm going to give you my spirit. And my spirit is going to help you live up to who you are. You won't get it right, you won't get it perfect.

But you will continue to grow and be transformed into the more like Jesus every day if you'll cooperate. And so we are secure and safe in the image of God because He sees us as holy and perfect and blameless. But he's giving us the Spirit to help us live up to who we are. That's all a part of being the new creation. We're put back together with the golden seams of God's grace.

And if all of that's true, and I believe it is true, then why do we still struggle from time to time with believing what God says? Well, the short answer is Satan. Right, Satan. Satan loves to exploit the times when we let ourselves fall, when we make a Mistake. When we sin and, and he whispers or he shouts accusations against us, wanting us to question whether God loves us.

Well, is he mad at me because I messed up again? Is he, is he, is he tired of us? Jenny Allen's written a few books. I don't know how many, some are best selling books. And she started the IF conference and I listened to Carrie Newhoff podcast all the time.

And she was on his podcast the other day and she's talking about her

new book, the lie you don't know you believe. And in that book she talks about three core lies that are in our lives. And these lies show up when we, when we mess up, when things fall apart, when we experience brokenness. And the three lies she says that almost everybody experiences that Satan loves to exploit. These are lies that we tell ourselves sometimes.

I am worthless. I have no significance or value. I am helpless. I can't change. I did it again.

I can't change. Things won't change. And the third one is I'm unlovable. If people really knew what I was like, then nobody would love me now. I don't know about you, I have a guess, but I don't know about you.

But Satan shows up with some form of these lies. When I experience brokenness, when I fail, when I sin, when things fall apart, when things aren't going the way I think they should, Satan whispers or he shouts accusations about me and about my value and about my whatever.

And if, if I don't shut those off the minute I hear them, then they will lead to anxiety, they will lead to insecurity, they will lead to all the things that take away my peace, joy and confidence if I listen to them. But what I've learned, and I'm not perfect at this, but I have made progress thanks to the spirit of God. What I do instead, instead of listening to those accusations is I've learned to silence Satan and listen to the voice of truth. So when Satan says you are worthless, God says, you're my beloved son, you're my beloved daughter, you're my beloved child. When Satan says you're helpless, God says you're being transformed.

Come on, come on, I'm working with you. When Satan says you are unlovable, God says, there's nothing that can separate my love from you. No thing. Nothing. Nothing.

And so over the last few months, it's been one of the most interesting years of my life. In lots of ways. I've watched God create newness, new identities, new stories. I've watched him continue his work of recreation, his work of new creation. I've watched a young man with an addiction that led him to significant legal trouble.

I have had a front row seat to watching him be put back together with the golden seams of God's grace. And what once was a source of shame, hidden, very hidden things, have now become a part of his message. He's very careful about this, but he carefully uses these fractured but repaired places of brokenness to bring glory to God. He's now an ambassador. He's a minister of reconciliation with a new life in Christ.

And he's putting himself, he's literally putting himself in places

where he can help others through his story. See God's glory, grace and love. I know a married couple that has multiple marriages in their distant past, something they tried to minimize, if not hide.

This was a source of guilt and shame.

And I watched them experience their new creation together. And now they no longer hide their past. Again, carefully, carefully, they will reveal it, put it on display so that others can see those golden seams of God's grace. They started a group, a small group, and basically they led with their story of repaired brokenness and their authenticity. And their honesty is a breath of fresh air to the group.

They are ambassadors. They are ministers of reconciliation. You know, God does not heal us just for our own sake.

He heals us for the sake of others. Henry Allen says we are wounded healers, and wounded healers are the best healers. Our wounds, our brokenness, touched by God's grace, don't disqualify us for ministry. They actually prepare us and enhance our ministry. Think of it as spiritual kintsuki, where the broken pieces of our lives are made new with God's golden grace.

And what was once fractured becomes beautiful and useful. Former sources of shame become opportunities for compassion. I understand. I understand. Our scars tell a story of God's redemption and the places where we once felt worthless, helpless and unlovable, they become the places where God's grace shines the brightest.

They allow us to come alongside someone and say, hey, I'm with you. I'm for you. I understand brokenness and I know somebody who can fix it, who can make things new. I believe that's what Paul's saying. We've been given the ministry of reconciliation.

God takes our restored brokenness and sends us back into the world as ambassadors. Not perfect people, but new creations shining bright with his grace. So the question is not can God use somebody like me? The question is, where are the golden seams in my life that God wants to use to bring healing to someone else.

Okay, hang with me for a second because it's going to seem like this is unrelated for just a minute or two.

Some people say, and I believe it, that the only man made things in heaven are the scars of Jesus.

Let me explain.

I believe that the resurrected body of Jesus, when he came out of the grave on a Sunday morning, I believe that his body was like the body

that we will receive when we're raised from the dead. It's the transformed body that prepares us to live in the new heaven, new earth. Paul talks about this in First Corinthians 15, that our bodies have to be changed and transformed, but there's still going to be a body. And in Philippians 3:21, Paul says that our present bodies will be transformed so that they will be like the glorious body of Jesus, which I think is the resurrected body. So the resurrected body of Jesus.

Hang with me, we're going to go somewhere. The resurrected body of Jesus seems to be different than the body he had before. And I, I would just say read the Gospels and you can see this. Remember when Mary Magdalene encountered Jesus, she didn't know who he was until he said Mary, she thought he was the gardener. The two guys walking on the road to Emmaus didn't know it was Jesus.

So his appearance seems to be different after the resurrection. But one thing remained, and that's his scars in his hands, his feet and his side. Think about Thomas, good old doubting Thomas, he doubted the resurrection, said, I won't believe it unless I see it. I won't believe it unless I see the scars.

Jesus in John 20 meets Thomas in his doubt and says, okay, let's do it. Touch him. And Thomas, wide eyed, jaw on the floor, says, my Lord, my God, he believed.

So I'm saying that the risen Jesus still bore the marks of suffering.

Jesus still has the brokenness of this world. He has the brokenness of our sin that we inflicted on him. And I believe that he ascended into heaven, the Shekinah, the cloud of God, the glory of God. Those scars went with him. Healed, yet present and visible.

And those scars are not a sign of defeat. They're a reminder of redemption. These are the eternal evidence that God takes what is broken and makes it whole and new. It's like golden seams of grace running through shattered pottery. His grace puts everything back together better than before, better than ever made new.

And here's what I think. One day when we see Jesus, he'll look at our scars and he'll show us his.

And maybe we'll smile and we'll be reminded of his love forever. So as we come to communion today, remember this.

Your scars are a reflection of Jesus. Paul says, I bear on my body the marks of the stigma, the stigmata of Jesus, we bear the same and it's a place of bonding with him. And so when we come to communion, remember that the cross is a proof of God's love for you. Jesus bore your sin. He took your shame, he took mine.

In a sense, he was broken to make us whole. So we take the bread and we take the cup with gratitude.

They are a powerful reminder that we are made new now and forever. Let's pray. Father, thank you for how you just make yourself known through all kinds of things, even Japanese pottery, and how these things can become beautiful insights into how you work. And we know it all belongs to you as we commune today. And we think about the body of Jesus and how it was scarred in so many ways.

And we think about his blood being poured out. He had to do so, but he was glad to do so. Just help us to be grateful and to be open and honest and ask how we can use our brokenness to. To help others, not in a way to celebrate our sin, but just to say that you are good and that you have a way of making things new. So just continue to bless us in Jesus name.

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