



Taken, Blessed, Broken, and Given

Luke 22: 14-20

Every Sunday we always do communion at the church. Some churches assign designated people to serve the service, some let the congregations to serve each other like what we usually do here at New Hope. We say, "...., this is the blood of Christ broken for you and His blood shed for you."

When I was a kid, my home church in Indonesia didn't take Holy Communion every Sunday. Only in several occasions they served Communion. As far as I can remember, I never saw Mom and Dad take Holy Communion at church. But when we moved to another town because of Dad's study, we went to a church that served Holy Communion every Sunday during the service. One day, when my parents took me and my siblings to the church, I noticed toward the end of the service, that a platter with a loaf of bread and a cup on it went around the congregations. One person would break the bread and dip it in the chalice and eat it, after they handed down the platter to the next person. I realized that the platter was getting closer toward me and my family. Because Mom and Dad didn't teach us anything about Holy Communion beforehand, the idea I got in my mind was, "What a great church it is. Different than our old church. Here they feed people during the service!" The more the platter got closer to me and my family, the more I became excited. As soon as I handed the platter to Dad who was sitting next to me, I broke the bread in a big chunk and dipped it in the cup. I spilled some grape juice from the cup because my bread was too big. As my Dad was losing face trying to deal with such an embarrassment, I enjoyed the communion bread as my second breakfast that morning.

Taken, Blessed, Broken, and Given

Henry Nouwen, in his book he wrote on friendship, said that the life of beloved is parallel to communion bread: *taken, blessed, broken, and given*. Though it is written to his secular friend, I found Nouwen's thoughts resonated deeply with Christian life as one body of Christ.

Taken as Beloved

Psychologists prove that kids who feel loved by their parents thrive in their development and wellbeing. Some of you who have experienced working with kids must have known the connection quickly. We might understand this more through this story.

Meet Jack Deere, a former professor at Dallas Seminary. In his autobiography *Even In Our Darkness*, he shared his life that had been longing for love. Growing up in a dysfunctional family with a father who committed suicide and a mother who was emotionally incompetent to deal with such tragedy, Jack soon became a troubled teenager who got involved in drinking, partying, and sex. His friendship with a campus minister from Young Life led Him to become a Christian. He went to seminary with the heavy baggage of emotional and spiritual wounds. But he is very fortunate to be

gifted with strong intellectuality. After finishing his study, he was offered a teaching position at the ultraconservative Dallas Theology Seminary. Soon he became a young, accomplished professor and a bestselling author who quickly rose to fame, speaking the world over about the ideal Christian life. But his life turned into a big mess. He had conflicts with the church and school he was involved in; his son committed suicide, and his marriage was in jeopardy. Through therapy, he realized how he had grown up feeling unloved and how his life had been driven by that. He poured this out during therapy, "I miss you, Dad. I grew up missing you because I love you. I never stopped loving you. You were the hero I wanted to be. Good, strong, smart, brave. I wish you had hung around to brag on me. I've spent my life looking for another father. I wish I could have watched you grow old. I don't know what your demons were or why you gave into them. You were hurt worse than I know. But I believe your hurts are healed now, and I can't wait to see you again." Toward the end of the book, he concludes that his story is about love.

New Living Translation (NLT) Psalms 139:16-17 says,

"You saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book.

Every moment was laid out

before a single day had passed.

How precious are your thoughts about me, O God.

They cannot be numbered!"

I hope each of us knows that we are loved by God. Whatever stage of life we are right now, I pray we cling to this powerful and beautiful truth. We are chosen as God's beloved.

Blessed

In *Latin*, to bless is *benedicere*. The word "benediction" that is used in many churches means literally: speaking (*dictio*) well (*bene*) or saying good things of someone. And for sure we need words of encouragement to build up each other. Blessing might be one of our favorite ways to close a letter or an email. And that's great. But what if a true blessing is about embodying, being a present to others by our presence?

In the state of blessedness, we recalibrate our values, not based on one's performance. We value others not because of what they can do for us, but merely because who they are before the Lord. Take a look at a friendship that we cherish. Sometimes a great friendship is simply enjoying each other's company, goofing around with friends, and being who we are without afraid of being judged.

Nouwen shares that the problem of modern living is that we are too busy to notice that we are being blessed so we look for affirmation in the wrong places. I think I agree with him. Most often blessedness is about being a good listener to the things that are unheard. If we listen carefully to

ourselves and to others, we'll be able to listen to God's voice saying how beloved we are. And when we grasp that, we know God is good all the time.

Broken

Shattered dreams, broken relationships, unmet needs, never-been-good-enough inner scripts, hurts carried from one's early life, and self-proving are the manifestations of brokenness. This summer I had a chance to meet with another manifestation of brokenness. One night after attending a Thursday evening concert in downtown Wheaton, I was on my way back home riding my bike when out of the blue a tremendous uncomfortable feeling enveloped me in a way I never experienced before. It really got under my skin. My inability to articulate what it was just made it so frustrating. On my bike, I uttered a prayer over and over, "Lord, what is this? Lord, what is this? Lord, what is this?" That night I went to bed with that uncharted feeling. The next morning I woke up, grabbed my Bible and my guitar, and just like a revelation, I had an explanation for what I had the night before. In a crystal clear, I saw that it was a pang of loneliness. Nevertheless, I understood that it's gonna be there no matter what. To quench it with any kind of effort will do nothing; it will only lead me to a false understanding and solution. In God's grace, I understood that the loneliness could only be quenched when I finally meet Jesus face to face. Yet, when I sit with it and embrace it, I feel God's comfort and hope start to pour out on me.

I've been sitting with three different friends in different times talking about this experience. I brought up the topic because I trust them. They are sweet friends of mine. I learned that my friends struggle with the same thing too. That connected me in a deeper level with them, emotionally and spiritually. Interestingly, these three friends of mine are coming from different stages of life, stories, and cultural backgrounds. When I realized about it, I understood one line I've come across saying "what is most personal is most universal."

In the world today where control and power are worshipped, brokenness is an unpopular idea. Sadly, our Christian life suffers from this as well. Brokenness is a shame. We handle it as obsessive as the world dealing with control and power. We don't sit with it and embrace it. Therefore, we make no avenue for grace and mercy.

From the brokenness angle, as Christians, we believe that what unites us with other people from every corner of the world is our status as fallen creatures who need the salvation work in Christ. This is the basic tenet of humanity in Christianity. Our weaknesses and helplessness are valuable things to connect us with others. In our heavenly Father's home, there are plenty of rooms for such people.

Given

Nouwen writes, "Our brokenness opens us to a deeper way of sharing our lives and offering each other hope. Just as bread needs to be broken in order to be given, so too, do our lives."

In his second letter to Corinthians, Paul wrote about the beautiful relationship of sharing lives and offering each other hope, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. (2 Cor 1:3-7).*

God's kingdom doesn't operate in an individual mode; it has to be in communal. And as the body of Christ, we are called to become bread for each other.

Rememberance (by Matt Redman)

Oh, how could it be
That my God would welcome me into this mystery
Say take this bread, take this wine
Now the simple made divine for any to receive.

By your mercy, we come to your table.
By your grace, you are making us faithful.

Chorus.
Lord, we remember you
And remembrance leads us to worship.
And as we worship you,
Our worship leads to communion.
We respond to your invitation,
We remember you.

See His body, His blood
Know that He has overcome every trial we will face.
None too lost to be saved, none too broken or ashamed,
All are welcome in this place.

Dying, you destroyed our deat.
Rising you restored our life.
Lord Jesus, come in glory
Lord Jesus, come in glory

Amen.

Evan Lature 8/26/18