

Luke 20:9-20  
Lent 5C  
April 7, 2019

“Remember ... God Restores the Broken”

**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

I hope you remember Shawn’s recent Children’s Message with the broken vase. If not, here’s quick recap. By repairing the vase using a Japanese technique called “Kintsugi” (see image below for an example) she helped us to remember how, even though we’re broken by sin in our lives, God longs to put us back together again. And when He puts us back together, we’re even more beautiful than we can remember or imagine.



Speaking of broken – Jesus says, (Luke 20:17) *“What then is this that is written: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, (but) when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”*

Typically, when something falls on breakable objects, bad things happen. During World War II Allied bombers bombed Germany. Given the technology of the day, collateral damage was unavoidable and widespread. In one of the many attacks, Allied bombs shattered a magnificent stained-glass window in one of Germany’s great cathedrals ... breaking it into hundreds of pieces. The next day, the congregation came

out to pick up as many of the fragments as they could find and stored them in the crypt. The church was broken into pieces by the violence of the world. In many ways, you and I are a lot like this old German church. We're all broken ... or crushed ... in some way by our daily disobedience toward God and His Word.

This Lent we remember ... all God our Father has done for us and does to us out of His perfect love through His Word ... and the Word made flesh, His Son Jesus. As we journey through life, we often stumble and fall into sin ... like a fragile vase or stained-glass window, we break into pieces. But Jesus stands ready to put us back together again ... making us whole ... restoring us to the state His Father intended when He created us.

Our gospel today takes place a couple of days after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. No sooner had the crowds shouted praises as Jesus entered Jerusalem for the final time when the temple leaders challenged Jesus saying, **(Luke 20:2)** *"Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority."* In this highly charged scene, Jesus told the parable we hear today – to the people of God, but also told within earshot of the temple leaders.

The parable reminds all present of His Father's comprehensive plan to redeem His creation and save His people from eternal death. The divine plan has included prophet after prophet ... patiently sent by God into the vineyard of His people to remind them of His love for them and to encourage them, *"Repent! Turn away from your sinful desires! Turn back to me!"* For all His trouble, God's people repeatedly rejected, beat, and even killed these faithful messengers as they continued to turn even further away from God.

Incredibly, God didn't stop reaching out to His people! I'm guessing most of us, if we found ourselves in the same predicament God was in would've stopped hoping and

simply brought down the judgment! But, not God. He remembered His covenant promise to them. He continued calling to them. Jesus reveals Himself in the parable as the vineyard owner says, (Luke 20:13) *“What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.”* Jesus echoes the words His Father spoke of Him at His baptism three years prior, (Luke 3:22) *“You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.”* And then, a few short months prior, at the top of a mountain during His Transfiguration, (Matthew 17:5) *“This is my beloved Son; with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”* God sent His beloved son into the vineyard, not to condemn it, but to save it. With these words, Jesus places Himself squarely in the middle of the parable for all to hear ... the people and the temple leaders.

Jesus’ eyes move from the people ... those the temple leaders God has called on to guide in accord with His Word ... to the leaders themselves. Staring at these teachers, intimately familiar with God’s Word, Jesus remembers God’s Word ... He quotes Psalm 118, saying, (Luke 20:17) *“What then is this that is written: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?’”* Then adds, (Luke 20:18) *“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, (but) when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”*

Jesus knows the hearts of men ... He knows who’s rejected Him ... including many of the temple leaders called by God to produce fruits of repentance by building up God’s people. Despite God’s persistence and Jesus’ direct warning of judgment, incredibly, the leaders’ response wasn’t to bear fruit of repentance. It was to send out spies ... to catch Jesus in some an incriminating situation (Luke 20:20) *“so as to deliver Him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.”* They only desired to take Him outside the city and have Him killed, so they could inherit the vineyard for their own.

And three days later, on Good Friday, they appeared to have fulfilled their dreams. Jesus was brought before Pilate to be sentenced to death on a Roman cross. Through the stone streets of Jerusalem, and outside the city gates Jesus dragged His cross. To the top of a rock called Calvary, the “Stone the Builders Rejected” was nailed to His cross. Baptizing His cross with His own blood, He suffered death at the hands of the “wicked tenants of the vineyard,” just as He foretold. He died for their sins, for the sins of Jerusalem, and for the sins of all mankind across all time and space. He was buried as the temple leaders looked on ... feeling assured that finally, the vineyard was theirs.

Three days passed ... and again, just as Jesus had said, (Luke 18:33) *“And after flogging Him, they will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise,”* – Jesus rose from the dead. The stone was rolled away. In rising from the dead to new life, Jesus proved to all who is truly the master of the vineyard ... the Lord of the earth ... the King of Creation. As God’s Word promises, so we remember ... (Luke 20:17) *“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone!”*

In architectural terms, a “cornerstone” ... especially in ancient times ... was the perfectly cut stone which was carefully placed to govern every angle of a building. It was the first stone laid. Upon it all other stones were set. Without it, the entire building would end up shifting on its foundation ... crumbling as it fell. Jesus, in paying the ultimate price for the sin of all mankind and rising from the dead to new life, proved that He is in fact, the cornerstone, the absolute central character upon which God’s plan of salvation is built. All who believe in the Cornerstone of Christ, will be saved. That is God’s promise!

God’s Word promises Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. All are subject to the Judgment Stone. Those persistently rejecting Jesus join the evil tenants.

The hard Stone of Divine Judgment, not the soft pillow of human reason, will fall on them ... leaving them crushed and scattered, destroyed and eternally separated from God.

But Jesus also says, **(Luke 20:18a)** *“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces.”* And we who sit here today are among “everyone” Jesus speaks to. God’s Word tells us, **(Romans 3:23)** *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* But He encourages us too, **(1 Corinthians 1:23-24)** *“But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but **to those who are called, both Jews and (Gentiles)**, Christ (is) the power of God and the wisdom of God.”* My brothers and sisters ... all of us will stumble at times, crashing down on the Stone. And like a fragile vase, or stained-glass window, we are shattered into pieces ... our old selves completely broken.

Recall the bombed-out church from earlier ... After the war, the church employed a noted artist to restore the window. Using the shattered fragments, he created a new piece that far surpassed the original. The physical structure of the church was restored. This is a great image of what happens to us who believe and trust in the Cornerstone, the Body of Christ, His Church on earth ... even as we fall into sin, breaking into pieces.

Restoration is what God does to us when, in repentance, we fall on the Cornerstone of the Church that is Christ. Our old sinful selves are, in fact, shattered. But the Holy Spirit creates a new thing. It's not a pleasant process, but it is a blessed one. And our Father is patient, His mercy is unending. Whenever we fall, He restores us ... again and again. Or, if necessary, He will continue to send servant after servant to us ... friends, loved ones, and even pastors that He works through ... begging us to repent ... to allow Him to put us back together again. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we trust and believe His promises. We confess our sins ... and we receive His forgiveness. He makes us whole again and

sends us back into the vineyard to continue our work ... producing fruit for our infinitely patient Master, who longs for all to be saved ... to join Him in eternal life.

**May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

James Kent