

Starting Fresh
Week 3: Broken and Built Up

I. But there is a form of art that I do “get.” I first learned about:

[Slide]: Kintsugi - in a book I read called *Art + Faith* by Mako Fujimori, who was an outstanding interview on *Tab MidWeek* a while back. He talked a lot in the interview and book about Kintsugi and how it has shaped his relationship with Jesus. Kintsugi runs counter to the Western idea that when something is damaged it should be tossed and replaced. In an industrial or commercial society when something is damaged or broken (be it objects or relationships), we tend to simply move on. Kintsugi is an artform of taking something broken and creating beauty out of the brokenness. There’s no attempt made at masking the damage, but rather the fissures are highlighted with materials that are more valuable than the original!

A. I’ve become enamored with this artform because it is so representative of our relationship with Christ. The gospel says that Jesus stepped into the brokenness of the world and is in the process of creating something more beautiful than if the brokenness had never existed in the first place. Where there was separation and brokenness, God filled in the gaps with His own Son Jesus!

- 1. The fresh start we all need is to acknowledge our brokenness and sin and allow the Artist to create something altogether new out of the disparate pieces of our lives. Starting fresh isn’t a denial of our brokenness, rather as God’s grace begins to fill in the gaps of our lives, it is the grace of God on full display that brings God the glory due Him.**
- 2. Somewhere in the back of your mind leave a little space for the idea of Kintsugi to marinate as we consider the Scriptures today.**

II. We’ve been walking with Peter and the disciples post Easter to see the fresh start that Jesus extended to each of them after they denied and deserted Him on His way to the cross. Jesus wasn’t caught off guard by their failure and we see His relentless pursuit to reaffirm their calling, expose what needed to be corrected, and commission them for the mission to which Jesus had called them.

A. Peter and the disciples tried to return to fishing, but they were frustrated. They were trying to run from their call but had in fact run right back into an affirmation of the call they’d received 3 years prior. The disciple John declared first that the man on the shore is Jesus and shouts out “it is the Lord!” It’s a declaration of humility and subjugation really.

[Slide]: Master!

B. They return to shore and what awaits them is Jesus and a charcoal fire. Jesus is leaning in with fellowship, but a fresh start will also entail correction. Not to embarrass Peter and the disciples but to show the tenacious love of Jesus! God isn’t in the shaming business, but He is in the business of demonstrating His love can reach into the deepest valley. Jesus takes these guys, especially Peter, back to their moment of failure to build them up. The building up process must begin at the root of our failure or the failure will always have a hold over us. Jesus brings Peter back to the charcoal fire of his denial. Rather than a scolding, Jesus extends an act of service and fellowship.

C. But there’s still the proverbial elephant in the room. Everybody knows something but it’s more comfortable to act like nobody knows anything. Praise God that Jesus isn’t a passive Lord. He’s going to bring to light what needs to be exposed. Because He loves us!!

John 21:15-17 [Slide]: 15 When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said to him, “you know that I love you.” “Feed my lambs,” he told him. 16 A second time he asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” he said to him, “you know that I love you.” “Shepherd my sheep,” he told him. 17 He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved that he asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” “Feed my sheep,” Jesus said.

- 1. Peter and the other disciples have experienced the hand of fellowship directly from Jesus. After breakfast, Jesus confronts Peter for the purpose of building him back. Peter is the leader of the disciples and the one who declared loyalty to Jesus (in his words) “even if the rest failed, he would not.” I’m sure on the night of Jesus’s arrest the other guys didn’t like Peter throwing them under the bus like that. Failing is bad enough but it really stings when you’ve run your mouth ahead of time! Peter had run his mouth publicly, denied Jesus publicly, and so publicly Peter would be built up and commissioned.**

2. Peter is still thinking of himself more like Simon than as Peter. When Peter confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, he received a name change to Peter, but a failure has a way of rocking our identity. We know Peter is still broken because Jesus addresses him as Simon. Jesus is meeting Peter where he is, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually.
3. Jesus asks a question that parallels Peter's recent denial.
[Slide]: Do you love me more than these?
"These" is an ambiguous pronoun and "love" is a bit more complicated of a term than what appears at face value. All that leaves us with a very interesting sentence.
 - a. Jesus could be referring to the fish, He could be asking Peter if Peter's love is greater than that of the other disciples, or Jesus could be asking Peter if Peter loves Jesus more than he loves his friends (the other disciples). I believe that all of them are true on some level and yet I believe there is good reason why Jesus is primarily getting to the loyalty of Peter in comparison to the other disciples. Peter is their leader, and all will be commissioned, yet Peter will have a distinct way in which his life will honor God.
 - b. Jesus asked Peter if Peter loves Him more than these guys do? Remember that Peter had boldly professed before Jesus's trial that his loyalty was in fact greater. Loyalty is a tangible expression of love. In response to Jesus's question Peter answers:
[Slide]: Yes, Lord.
4. There is a 3-fold questioning of Peter that obviously coincides with Peter's previous 3-fold denial, but there's something happening on the level of the original languages that makes this fresh start for Peter even more profound.
 - a. There are 3 Greek words that correspond to our English word "love."
 - (1) [Slide]: Agape
This is the strongest form of love in the ancient world. It's most often used in a divine context. It's unbreakable or unconditional love. Let's call it John 3:16 love! This is interesting though, when humans are attached with agape love most of the time it's in a negative sense.
For example, in Matthew 6:24 humans are capable of agape love in connection to money.
 - (2) [Slide]: Phileo
This is familial love, not as powerful as agape, but the foundation for family and relational bonds. It's a substantive type of love that still acknowledges the fickleness of our human condition. This is the namesake of one of our cities to the north: Philadelphia, city of brotherly love.
 - (3) [Slide]: Eros
This is the lowest level of love in the ancient world that described utilitarian love or erotic love. This is love as a consumer product. It uses another person to make us feel good. Ironically, this is the name of Taylor Swift's new tour that blew up Ticketmaster. I'm not sure what that says about our current culture, but it makes me sad.
 - b. We took some time to walk through the 3 nuances of love in the ancient world because it comes into play in this text. When Jesus asks Peter if Peter loves Him the word that is used initially is agape. Peter, do you have an unconditional, unbreakable love for me? And what does Peter say?
[Slide]: Yes, Lord
[Slide]: But
 - (1) Peter longs to say yes wholeheartedly as all of us pursuing the Lord desire, but he knows his words are hollow! He stands before the Lord as a broken man! This formerly bold, perhaps even prideful man is broken and has the wisdom to be honest before Jesus.
Yes, Lord. You know that I have phileo love (affection) for you.
 - c. There is another important word in the text as well and it's the word "to know." There is knowledge in an informational sense and there is knowledge in an intimate sense. Peter in his reply to Jesus is saying, "Jesus you have all the information. You know that I phileo You."
 - d. O.k. Peter, then feed my lambs.
These aren't Peter's lambs, they're Jesus's lambs but Jesus is commissioning Peter for leadership. Peter is to keep his loyalty on Jesus and out of the overflow of His bond with Christ, care for the flock. It would grow but for now consisted of the guys around him and the remaining faithful women.

5. A second time Jesus asked Peter, yet Jesus is still meeting Peter in his perceived identity, "Simon, son of John, do you agape me?" Yes, Lord, You have all the information. You know that I phileo You. You know I have affection for You. I'm committed to You Lord, but I can't repeat the word "agape."

a. Peter is finally standing before the Lord as a broken man but in process of being built up.

b. Jesus commissions Peter to "Shepherd my sheep." Jesus uses a different word from His previous response perhaps to encompass a fuller job description of Peter's charge. There's a time to feed or tend and a time to shepherd or lead. As a pastor or elder there is a time to feed, coddle, or care for the sheep but a shepherd is also charged with getting the flock from one place to another. This is ultimately in Jesus's hands, but Peter was being commissioned as a vital instrument in the feeding and leading of Jesus's flock.

6. A third time Jesus asked Peter, but on this last exchange, again coinciding with Peter's 3-fold denial, Jesus asks, "Simon, son of John, do you phileo me?" Peter loses it! There's a lot to unpack here in the way that Peter responds to this 3rd time of questioning.

a. Peter knows unmistakably at this point that Jesus's intentions are to build up a broken man. Peter's response is incredible and the moment that Peter finally embraces:

[Slide]: Starting Fresh!

Listen carefully to Peter's words:

John 21:17 [Slide]: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

b. "Oida" in the Greek is informational knowledge. "Gnosko" in the Greek is an intimate knowledge. Peter's response is "Lord, You have information on everything and You intimately know the state of my heart!" In Christ, there is nothing that escapes His intimate knowledge and bond with us.

Jesus alone has the complete ability to see two aspects of our lives simultaneously:

[Slide]: Who we can be and what is reality!

c. Jesus was looking into the depths of Peter's soul that day and it was a broken man standing on the shore of Galilee. But he was a broken man being built up into the man God had called Peter to be. Maybe for the first time Peter was in position to follow Jesus from a place of total:

[Slide]: Dependence

III. Perhaps the point of the text isn't so much in Peter's response but in Peter's conditional acknowledgment. Peter was a broken man, but he was being built up to be an unstoppable force.

A. What was the turning point of Peter's fresh start?

Twice Jesus asked Peter if Peter had unconditional love for Him and twice Peter responded that he wanted to, but the reality was an imperfect affection.

The third time Jesus meets Peter right where he is. He knows Peter's brokenness and imperfections and embraces Peter anyway. The reality of Peter's heart wasn't a surprise to Jesus so why did Jesus ask Peter if he loved Him unconditionally?

1. The man standing before Peter wasn't an ordinary man. Jesus had gone to the cross demonstrating unconditional love to those who would betray Him. Jesus had come from the grave demonstrating unconditional love to those who had betrayed Him! If all Peter could bring to the table was broken affection, it never was about what Peter brought to the table anyway! Peter was finally broken, and his fresh start would come on the agape love Jesus had for him. Jesus was reminding Peter on the shore that day that their relationship wasn't built on Peter's conditional love but on the unconditional love of the Father on full display through Jesus! It's always been:

[Slide]: Jesus + Nothing = Everything

2. Peter has been reaffirmed in his calling and he's being commissioned for the mission.

Peter has finally embraced his fresh start via:

[Slide]: Brokenness

3. Peter is now positioned to both feed and lead from a posture of dependence.

B. That's the only posture from which a Kingdom impact can be made. You might be broken today but that also means there is an opportunity to start fresh. God doesn't allow us to be broken to cast us aside.

God allows our brokenness to build us up into the people He's already called us to be!

There are no accidents in this world. God's calling and commission over your life have not changed.

1. If you're living into that today, praise God! But if you're not, what are you waiting for?

Accept the fresh start God is extending to you today.