

**Brackenhurst 9 August 2009 09h30**  
**Brokenness**

**Welcome & Notices**

**Scripture:**

Romans 3:21-31

Luke 10:25-37

**Message**

**INTRODUCTION**

- Over the last few weeks I have been speaking about how Jesus is not my Saviour
  - And last week finished off by looking at what salvation is about
- And one of the things that I said was that Salvation is from sin
  - And then defined sin as being brokenness.
- I thought that what I would like to do this morning is to look at that idea more fully
  - Really just unpack the concept of sin as brokenness a little.
  - And I would want to challenge you to go home, and choose your favourite 'sin' passage in the Bible and replace the word sin with the word 'brokenness' or the brokenness word of the correct tense, and see how its meaning changes
    - \* and see whether the passage makes more sense or not
  - And I think that it is important that we do that because it seems to me that the meaning of the word sin has become something different than when it was first used as an English word to replace the Greek and Hebrew words of the original text.
    - \* in the biblical Hebrew, the generic word for sin is het. It means to err, to miss the mark. It does not mean to do evil.[3]
    - \* the Greek word hamartia (ἁμαρτία) is usually translated as sin in the New Testament. In Classical Greek, it means "to miss the mark" or "to miss the target". In Koine Greek, which was spoken in the time of the New Testament, however, this translation is not adequate. (Wikipedia)
- See, today, when we look at the word sin we immediately think of breaking a rule
  - We have this idea that God has set certain rules in place that we dare not transgress, and if we do we have sinned, and must therefore confess out sin to God
    - \* Ask, and receive, forgiveness in the name of Jesus

- \* And then we can be on our merry way.
- If that is the case, then I need to ask what is the point of Jesus?
  - The Jewish people were always able to do that: think of the great Psalms of confession.
- And, of course, we also get sucked in to the whole paradigm of religion being about sin, guilt and forgiveness
  - “for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God...”
  - \* Conservative-evangelical memory verse!
- And so I am a worthless sinner
- I think sin is bigger than breaking a law, and refers, not to breaking of a law that God has set in place, but rather to the brokenness of our humanity that was created in the image of God
  - It is this that Paul recognises in the passage I just quoted, and I think that it makes more sense to read it in this way:
    - “For all are broken and fall short of the glory of God...”
- All of us, while we may or may not break rules that God has set before us, all of us are people who are broken, and who live in a world that is broken.
  - We experience a brokenness that destroys our relationships with our selves, with others, and with God, and even with the world around us
- I don't think that it was any coincidence that when Jesus was asked what should be done to inherit eternal life, that he responded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.”
  - He was speaking about a kind of a lifestyle in which the broken nature of relationships is healed.
- This also has to do with the concept of holiness
  - So often we speak of being righteous, or being holy
    - \* John van de Laar suggests that holiness is more properly understood as ‘wholi-ness’; being whole people
- The brokenness is transformed into wholeness; broken relationships are transformed into whole and healed ones
  - Rather than holiness being perfect obedience to a set of rules
    - \* That was what the Pharisees wanted, and we know that Jesus didn't think too highly of them.
- So how is brokenness restored?
  - Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, and this story is set in the context of Jesus sending out the 72

- \* At the heart of their message was the word of peace, the work of healing, and the message that the kingdom of God is at hand
- And it is the rejection of this peace and healing which, they're told to say, will result in the judgement of God
  - Notice, not a message to repent from sin!
    - \* But a message to turn from brokenness to healing
  - And in my understanding it is the consequences of the rejection of the message of peace that will bring about the town's destruction.
- The 72 return having said that they have seen the satan, or the accuser, fall from heaven.
  - And isn't that so often the source of guilt?
    - \* We feel guilty because something says we have done something wrong?
- So where the kingdom of God is proclaimed, when peace and healing is prominent, the guilt of feeling accused is taken away
  - isn't that an amazing message?
- And so it is in this context that Luke has a teacher of the Law standing up to test Jesus
  - And isn't it true that so often it is the law which accuses us?
    - \* We define sin by having broken a law?
    - \* Paul says something like that.
- And this teacher of the law asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, the life of the coming age; or to experience the kingdom of God at hand now
  - How to make the life of the coming age real in the present
    - \* Jesus says simply, "Love wastefully"
- But this teacher of the Law, and lawyers are like that, aren't they, he wants every i dotted and t crossed.
  - This was what the Pharisees did.
    - "If we must love who must we love; how must we love?"
- So he asks, "If I must love my neighbour, then who is my neighbour?"
  - And Jesus tells the parable that we know so well
- So what can we learn from the parable?

### **(1) Brokenness is all around us**

- As Jesus addresses the teacher of the Law he takes a situation that was well known to the community.
  - He speaks of a journey on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho
    - \* A road that had many twists and turns, and hills and valleys
    - \* And a road that was a well-known hi-jacking hotspot

- It probably wouldn't have been unusual to see a beat up person lying on the side of the road
  - \* But it would have been unusual to stop
- We know today in our own country how we are warned not to stop to help someone because it could be a ploy
  - \* We're even warned not to stop for policemen or traffic officers because it could be a trap.
- It was no different then, but there were other good reasons not to stop as well
  - For Temple officials such as the priest and the Levite it was important for them to preserve their purity
    - \* their ritual cleanliness by passing by on the other side
  - If, after all the man was dead they themselves would break God's law and become impure and be unable to do their duties
    - \* And, if he were dead, there was nothing that they could do for him.
- And so the priest and the Levite pass by, on the other side of the road where there is the least possibility of having to get involved.
- And so the first thing that this parable teaches us is simply that broken people surround us on the road of life
  - On the one hand he obvious who lie broken and bruised at the side of the road.
    - \* Those whom people see, but choose not to see
    - \* People we can reach out to, but don't, for whatever reason
  - Maybe we're too busy, maybe we don't want to involve ourselves in somebody else's mess, maybe we don't think that we have the resources
- And then there is another group of broken people on the road of life
  - Those are the less obvious.
    - \* In this story it is the priest and the Levite
  - We may want to condemn them for walking by
    - \* But the reason that they walked by is that they too were broken
  - They weren't whole enough to be able to put their holiness aside to help another human being lying on the side of the road
    - \* They were afraid of becoming unclean
  - And I'm sure that if they had been lying hurt on the side of the road, they probably wouldn't have wanted a Samaritan to help them anyway
    - \* So there are a whole lot of people who hide their brokenness by ignoring others
- I think, when we look around us today we have to recognise that this parable is still true

- There are people who are obviously broken everywhere we look
- And then there are those who choose to hide their brokenness.
  - Again, all around us
    - \* People who find it difficult to love as Jesus commanded
    - \* People who find it difficult to live fully
  - To let go of the rules and laws that they have surrounded themselves with to protect themselves
    - \* To keep themselves ritually pure
- Ironically, it was the one who had no choice but admit his brokenness who ended up being healed
  - And that brings me to my second point:

## **(2) Admitting our brokenness**

- Paul makes that very important observation beloved of evangelicals that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
  - or, as I prefer to translate it, All are broken and fall short of the glory of God.
    - \* A statement that Jesus illustrated so well in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
- I think that it is important not to say others have sinned, or are broken, and fallen short;
  - But I have sinned, am broken, and fall short.
- Reminds me of the story of the Southern preacher.
  - Won't mention his denomination because there may be a Baptist here who'll be embarrassed.
  - But the preacher stood up in church one Sunday morning and brought an accusation before the congregation: "One of you, he said, has committed a grievous sin by spreading a viscous rumour about me. The story is going around town that I am a member of the Klan."
    - \* And the church was dead silent.
  - He said, "You need to confess your sin so that you may find redemption."
    - \* And the church was quite.
  - "Brother or sister" the preacher said, "Healing and forgiveness is to be found in confession."
    - \* And still nobody said a word
  - The preacher continued, "Our Lord is merciful and in him is plenteous redemption, have courage and stand to reveal your iniquity to God..."
    - \* Finally, trembling, a beautiful blond bombshell stood up
    - \* The most gorgeous woman in the church.

- “I’m sorry, Pastor,” she said. “All I did was tell my friend Betty-Sue that you’re a wizard under the sheets...”
- When we point out the sin of others, we reveal our own brokenness.
  - It is through the law — the perfect way of living life — that we become aware of our brokenness
    - \* Of how far we fall short, and this should lead us into a place of humility
- Being able to recognise and admit to that brokenness that permeates our lives is the starting point of our healing
  - Now admitting that we are broken people is not the same as confessing our sin, and I’ll get to that in a moment
- We all are broken for many reasons, I’ll mention a few, but there are probably many more that you could name
  - We are broken people because of our parents: even though they did their best, they also were broken and may have said or did things that hurt us
  - We are broken because of our teachers: the one who called you stupid, and has left you feeling that way for the rest of your life
  - Because of other people — the other kids at school who bullied you, or called you names
  - Relationships that didn’t work out
    - \* And so struggle in relationships today — trust
  - Because of society where we learn not to trust in the people and structures—
    - \* Theologically we speak of institutional sin: the brokenness of society that is so deeply ingrained that it is accepted that that’s just the way it is
    - \* I think that’s what Jesus meant when he spoke about towns not being able to accept the word of peace
- There are many reasons that we are broken as people, and mostly we can blame others for them
  - But as I look at the parable that Jesus tells I find it interesting that he doesn’t focus on the robbers, those who left the man broken on the side of the road
- He tells the story as though it is a simple fact of life that there is a possibility of falling into the hands of those who will leave you broken
  - Jesus doesn’t blame the robbers for the man’s plight, he doesn’t spend time analysing why they did what they did
    - \* or even condemning them
  - And I have no doubt that the robbers were themselves broken people.
- Jesus says this thing has happened, now what?
  - There are two options:

\* One of them is to lie on the side of the road dying, the other is to discover healing

- And that brings me to my last point:
  - It is only when our brokenness is recognised that we can discover healing.

### **(3) There is healing for brokenness**

- As the preacher said in the story earlier, there is healing for our sin and brokenness.
  - Once we recognise our brokenness, we can find healing for it
- So confession isn't about being sorry for what we have done, but is about confronting the darkness in our lives so that we can heal
  - It is not "I'm sorry I did a, b, and c. please forgive me and help me not to do it again."
  - Rather it is I did a, b, and c which was not helpful, and hurt me and others. Help me to understand which area of brokenness in my life caused me to behave this way so that, with your help, I can change into becoming a person who is more whole."
- And I just want to say a couple of things about healing that we can take from the story before I close off
  - Firstly, there are two sides to the healing coin:
- there is our own healing
  - Which comes from being able to recognise our own brokenness, and confess is open ourselves up to change
- then there is the healing that we can offer to others
  - That comes from being able to recognise their brokenness
- Now I don't think that this is about pointing out people's sins for them
  - Mostly we are very aware of our own sins
- But rather it is to be found in accepting people as they are, accepting that others are also broken people who oftentimes act out of their brokenness
  - While it may be hurtful to us, it is not helpful to react in a hurtful way
    - \* but rather to respond out of the humility of knowing that we too are broken, and have probably one and said things that have hurt others.
  - Healing takes place in an accepting community
- I also want to say that healing often comes from the most unlikely source.
  - in the story we would expect the priest or the Levite, people who worked for God, to be the ones to offer help to the one fallen on the side of the road
    - \* And yet it came from a Samaritan, one who was equally unclean to the so-called men of God.

- Perhaps because he too had felt the pain of rejection
  - \* He knew his brokenness, and so was able to help the broken
  - \* The priest and Levite thought they were okay
- Then lastly I want to say that healing is costly.
  - When our confession is simply “I’m sorry God, I won’t do it again” it’s like a band aid that doesn’t really do much.
- True healing is costly in terms of time, maybe in terms of emotions, in terms of forgiveness because we need to confront the dark places in our hearts, and that is not always easy.
  - It is costly for us, and it is costly for those around us.
    - \* As we accept others who are broken, sometimes it takes its toll on us, and I think that sometimes the reason we don’t experience the healing we’re looking for is because we are unwilling to pay the price
- Paul writes about Jesus and his brokenness on the cross as being a way for God to accept us in our brokenness
  - And it is in knowing that we are accepted by God
  - That even, in the midst of the most terrible brokenness, we really are okay, that we find freedom not to judge, but to love instead
    - \* And to offer peace and the kingdom of God to others.

## CONCLUSION

- God’s rules are here to help deal with brokenness, but rules aren’t going to fix it
  - They just dealing with the symptoms, not the disease
  - To deal with disease it needs to be diagnosed first
    - \* Through knowledge
- And Paul puts his finger on the button
  - We are all broken and fall short of the glory of God
- It is simply that confession that we need to make
  - And to be willing to confront that brokenness in the light that Jesus offers to us,
    - \* Not to make us feel guilty, but to know how to be healed
- And when we do that, when we begin to live lives that are whole and healed
  - Then we become ‘whol-i’ people
- That’s when we start to experience salvation
  - And that’s when our relationships start to be healed
    - \* And that’s when we start to love ourselves, to love others, and to love God
- May it be so for you, even as it is for me. Amen