

Dear Friend,

I do hope that today has the promise of God's goodness in it for you. Though we all have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death at some time, as David did in Psalm 23, we have the promise of the same revelation as he was given. One day David was able to look behind him and see that the mercy and goodness of God had followed and would follow him all the days of his life. He had come to a place where he knew that God had a plan and purpose for his life that would not fail.

So it is for you and me today. At Times Square Church, in spite of the difficulties many in this congregation are going through, we are planning to unite with up to 100 inner-city churches and help financially underwrite start-up feeding programs for those in need. What an incredible opportunity to reach out and be ambassadors of the goodness and mercy through Jesus Christ which has clearly followed all of us on this journey.

We are living in days of extraordinary opportunity for the testimony of Christ. As is spoken in this newsletter, may the goodness of Jesus, through His church, spread through our cities with the sweet fragrance of His love and compassion.

Be encouraged. Jesus will never fail you.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

THE BLESSING OF BROKENNESS

by Carter Conlon

"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:36–39).

What was it about this woman's actions that prompted God to record it in the pages of Scripture, to be remembered throughout the generations?

First, we know that the woman was a sinner, although we do not know for sure what her specific sin was. She had with her a jar made of alabaster, a type of stone that was carved out to contain costly perfume. The only way to get the perfume out was to break the neck of the bottle. In other words, it was in the brokenness that the fragrance would be released.

Perhaps all this lady had left was contained in that alabaster jar. There were no banks back

then, so this could have been the entirety of her savings—maybe even the wages of sin. It was a representation of all of her hopes, her dreams, her ambitions and her future. However, this woman found something so wonderful and profound about Jesus Christ that she took that jar, broke it, and poured the ointment out on His feet.

There is a certain fragrance of Jesus that only comes through brokenness.

The fragrance of that moment of worship permeated the entire room—a type of fulfillment of the Scripture that calls us to be a savor of Christ everywhere we go. This sweetness of God that is to follow us is something that does not come through just study or prayer, as wonderful as those things are. There is a certain fragrance of Jesus that only comes through brokenness.

Recently as I sat in on a morning session at a conference where I was to speak in the evening, I was greatly ministered to by a broken man. This pastor stood before us to share a 20-minute devotional that would lead the group into prayer, and from the moment he began to speak, I sensed there was something different about him. I don't know all the details of this particular pastor's

life, but I can tell you one thing—I know a broken man when I hear one. I know a man who has come to the end of himself, no longer concerned about what people think about him. There is something so precious in a life that has no greater purpose than to be poured out for the love and glory of Jesus Christ.

It was amazing to be in that room and literally feel something spiritual happen—something indescribable that cannot be created by music or by any amount of hype. It is not something that man can do—it is something that God does. It was the fragrance of Jesus being released—Christ Himself coming into a room and bearing witness to that which truly honors and represents Him. Suddenly I was surrounded by thoughts of the majesty of Jesus Christ, and the only thing I could do was put my face into my hands and weep.

It is when we have failed that we truly start to appreciate God.

■ REALIZING THE LOVE OF GOD

How do we get to this place of brokenness? I believe we find a perfect example in the story of the prodigal son (see Luke 15). This young man had an inheritance from his father, yet he ended up taking this blessing to a faraway place. Finally, after squandering all his resources and having to resort to feeding pigs, he came to his senses and realized that his life pursuit was empty. The testimony of being his father's son was in shambles because of what he had done and where he had gone.

This son decided to get up and head home. He had gone out with

such incredible dreams, but he was coming home empty—his plans destroyed, his resources bankrupt. His failure was before his face constantly, for the testimony out of his mouth was, “Father, I have sinned, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (see Luke 15:21). In other words, I have lost something of my position with you, so just make me a servant, a slave forever.

How shocked he must have been to find his father running to embrace him. Not only that but his father brought him into the house, called for the fatted calf to be killed, and gathered the musicians, saying, “Strike up the band! We are going to have a celebration because my son has come home!” I imagine that the realization of his father's incredible love and mercy brought him to a place of brokenness.

In the same way, it is when we have failed that we truly start to appreciate God. It is when we have hit the wall, after we have gone out with pride only to realize later that we have misrepresented Him publicly or privately. In our generation, many of God's people, including His ministers, have done the same thing as the prodigal son. They have taken the anointing, the blessing, and the strength of God and gone into places far away from His heart. Many headed out with pride, filled with their own ideas and theories about God, only to lift their head one day and say, “What a fool I have been. What a foolish ministry I have been part of; what a foolish testimony I have created. I have taken this life of God and ultimately made a reproach of the name of my Father!” They finally come to the realization that if it weren't for the love and mercy of God, none of us would be standing today.

It is amazing to begin to understand the depth of this love—which the

apostle Paul described as a love that passes our natural understanding (see Ephesians 3:19). You and I begin to see many people come to the saving knowledge of Christ as we bear this incredible love of God in these earthen vessels. Remember, God bears witness to what belongs to Him—what is true. It is not because of the eloquence of our preaching or the accolades on our wall, but because God chooses to bear witness with His own Person and presence through those who have been broken—those who have truly come to understand how loving and merciful He is.

■ A SCENT OF FREEDOM AND PROVISION

It is true that we bear the treasure of the risen Christ in these earthen vessels, just as the Scripture says. However, it is also true that our rigidity can sometimes keep these vessels unbroken, consequently locking inside the fragrance of Christ.

Tragically, we almost pride ourselves in our ability to be unbroken.

For example, Moses was a man who had a great calling of God, but the rigidity of holding to his own ideas rendered him unusable. The plan and purpose was there, but Moses was still governed by his own strength and his own thinking. So the Lord brought him to the wilderness for forty years until he came to a place of brokenness and a loss of all confidence in himself. By the time God finally called him, Moses said, “I might have been a mighty speaker, but I no longer am. I have lost all of what I had then” (see Exodus 4:10, Acts 7:22).

If you have been broken, if life has disappointed you, if your plans have fallen through, the one thing that you can do today is open your heart to the love of God.

In the Lord's eyes, however, Moses was ready to lead three million people to freedom. When Moses walked into that camp in brokenness and dependence upon the Lord, I believe the fragrance of God spread throughout the whole camp of Israel. After all, why else would the people listen to an 80-year-old man with a stick saying, "God sent me to set you free?" Remember, they had been in bondage under the Egyptians for 430 years! In the natural it was an insane plan. There must have been something more—something of the sweetness of God that was being poured out through this broken vessel. It was as if suddenly the fragrance of Christ, the scent of freedom, filled the camp.

In the same way, if I am preaching to you and Christ is bearing witness to my words, the smell of freedom is coming into your heart and mind. Suddenly these thoughts begin to emerge: "Hey, this prison door cannot hold me anymore. This wound of the past cannot continue to dominate my thinking. I don't have a reason to be afraid of the future because God is in my future."

Consider the brokenness that Joseph had to endure. At an early age, God gave Joseph a great promise that he would one day be put in a position of leadership and that through his hands many people would be fed. Yet in his youth, Joseph was too full of pride to reach his potential. It was not until he found himself in a place of brokenness—until after thirteen years of enduring trials, temptations, betrayal, and even wrongful imprisonment—that the promise was fulfilled.

Joseph stood before the leader of one of the greatest nations in the world at that time, and with just a few words of wisdom that God had given him, suddenly in Egypt there was a smell of provision. A sweet aroma of Christ was released in Pharaoh's court through this broken man. This aroma even reached all the way to Israel, right to Joseph's own family, who walked into the center of God's provision and were sustained for many years to come.

■ BRINGING WHAT IS MOST PRECIOUS

The woman in our opening text who came into the Pharisee's house no longer cared to court the favor of the religious establishment around her, nor did she seem to scorn it. The only object of her affection was Jesus. The highest calling of her life at that moment was to be poured out for the One who received her in spite of her failure to properly represent Him as one of His chosen children in the earth.

The religious order of the day rejected her. They were more or less stuck in their pursuit of the best seats in the house, the titles of "Master, Master" and the finest robes. They were completely outside of what was happening here and were unable to see any value in this act of love.

Unfortunately, that will always be the case for the religious.

On the other hand, this woman heard Jesus, and she understood that He was willing not only to forgive her but to give her a future and a purpose for her life. So she brought what was most precious to her—the sum total of what her life had amounted to—and broke it, pouring out the precious ointment on the feet of Jesus as a love offering. How the scent of freedom must have permeated the room. That is the blessing of brokenness.

He loves you whether or not you see your life as a success; He loves you in spite of how far short you feel you have fallen.

Now this woman could have come into the Pharisee's house, handed Jesus the jar and said, "Master, in this vessel is a very expensive fragrance. It has the potential to fill the atmosphere with a scent that will linger for hours." She could have merely told Him about it, and there would have been truth in what she said. However, it was in the breaking of that flask that the fragrance was released and the whole room was filled with the glory of God. Tragically, we almost pride ourselves in our ability to be unbroken. We spend much of our pursuit trying to shore up these vessels so that they might not appear to be weak or cracked. Half of our gospel is all about how to keep ourselves strong, intact and looking good, when in reality there is a sweet aroma that can emanate only from a broken vessel.

■ FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BROKEN

You may now be asking how this applies to you. If you have been broken, if life has disappointed you, if your plans have fallen through your fingers, if people have made promises to you but those promises have failed, if your hope and your resources have run dry—the one thing that you can do today is open your heart to the love of God, for He passionately loves you. You are the object of His affection—the reason He went to a cross. He loves you whether or not you see your life as a success; He loves you in spite of how far short you feel you have fallen. It makes no difference to Him, for He loves you unconditionally.

Watch what happens as you allow the fragrance of Jesus to fill your house, your workplace, your own heart and mind.

Allow God's love to touch and fill your heart. It is a love that cannot be measured by human reasoning; a love that has not diminished in spite of what you have done with it or where you have gone with it. Let this incredible love of God bring you to your knees—to the place where the only thing you can do is pour out from the depths of your heart great love and gratitude to the One who gave everything for you. As the

psalmist said, *“Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him...”* (Psalm 62:8).

Once you come to that place at the feet of Jesus, you will discover that He does something profound and powerful through those who have experienced the blessing of being broken in the sight of a holy God. Just say to Him, “Lord, whatever I am, whatever I have, I simply take it and pour it out on Your feet. I thank You for letting a nail go through those feet for me. I thank You for loving me and promising hope in spite of what I have done.” In doing this, you will find that you have a lot more power than you know. When you simply find a place to pray in your house, pouring your affection out on the feet of Jesus, watch what happens to your sons and daughters, to your family, to all those around you. Watch what happens as you allow the fragrance of Jesus to fill your house, your workplace, your own heart and mind. Watch as the presence of Jesus goes with you wherever you are sent.

The wonderful thing is that it is very difficult to resist the presence of God. No matter how hard-hearted people are or how much they claim not to care about God, they simply will not be able to resist the presence of God when He comes in with that sweet smell of freedom. This is how lives will be changed and hearts will be healed. This is how the kingdom of God will go forward in our generation—as we simply allow the savor of Christ to flow through these broken vessels!

Carter Conlon
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CARTER CONLON

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TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

| | | | |
|----------|---------|----------------|--------|
| Sunday | 10:00AM | 3:00PM | 6:00PM |
| Tuesday | 7:00PM | Church Service | |
| Thursday | 7:00PM | Prayer Meeting | |
| Friday | 7:00PM | Church Service | |

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This newsletter is an edited version of “THE BLESSING OF BROKENNESS” a sermon given on **May 13, 2012** in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at tscnyc.org. You are welcome to make additional copies of this sermon for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission existing copyright laws apply. This sermon cannot be posted on any website or webpage without permission from Times Square Church. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the King James Version.