

The Art of Being Broken

Revelation 7:9-17
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When a cherished porcelain cup or bowl gets broken, a really cool way of repairing it is through the ancient Japanese art of Kintsugi. Dating back to the 1400s, Kintsugi uses molten gold instead of glue to piece the pottery back together. You may have seen such pieces at a museum, or you can Google it online. It creates beautiful gold lines in the pottery where it was broken. Emma Johnson writes about Kintsugi at wellbeing.com, using it as a metaphor for healing – mind, body and soul.¹

In our New Testament lesson today, the Apostle John offers divine revelation as a metaphor for healing – mind, body and soul. Toward the end of his life, John was exiled to the Greek island of Patmos amid Rome's brutal persecution and murder and destruction of Christians. It's there that John receives a vision from God offering a glimpse of the Lord's salvation, the Lord's judgment and glory, when Jesus returns to set all things right.

Just as we share in Christ's resurrection power here and now, his grace and mercy, his wisdom and understanding, we also share in the healing and restoration he will bring once, for all, at his second coming. While our share in this divine healing and restoration is not yet full and complete, it is no less powerful, no less meaningful, no less needed in this broken and hurting world of ours, amid the pain and suffering of our families and friends, and ourselves.

John tells us that in the fullness of Christ, "there will be a great multitude that no one (can) count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands." This multitude of people, says John, are those "who have come out of the great ordeal."

Boy, can we relate to coming out of the great ordeal. And not just the pandemic, but all the ordeals of life – the loss or illness of loved ones, struggles with and against family members, the brutal reality of money problems, and the cold, hard pain of bullying and abuse. Life is full of ordeals, things that leave us broken inside, if not shattered through and through.

The good news is that the Lord comes to us in those moments, to put the pieces back together. And not only that, but as we receive the healing and restoration of the Lord, we are made stronger, just as broken porcelain is stronger at those seams where gold has been used to piece it back together.

¹ <https://www.wellbeing.com.au/mind-spirit/mind/kintsugi-the-art-of-being-broken.html>

Revelation tells us that “the one who is seated on the throne” restores God’s people amid their brokenness and shelters them from all pain and suffering. Under the shelter of the Lord, we “will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike (us), nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne (is our) shepherd, and he ... (guides us) to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from (our) eyes.”

In order for us to understand and feel and receive the healing power of God right now, today, and throughout all of life, let us look more closely at the art of Kintsugi, the art of being broken. As I have said, Kintsugi pottery has beautiful gold seams running through it, and this reminds us that “something can break and yet still be beautiful, and that once repaired, it is stronger at the broken places.”

No matter the pain and suffering you’ve endured, you are more beautiful and stronger for having gone through it. In making this point, Emma Johnson uses, as a metaphor, the repaired pottery with its gold seams at the broken place, saying, “... The broken object accepts its past, and paradoxically becomes more robust, more beautiful and more precious than before it was broken.” “When something breaks,” says Johnson, “it is changed forever. ... The way it is put back together – the bonds forged to fix it – become as much a part of its new incarnation as its older parts.”

Living as we do in a world focused on unattainable perfection and combative strength, it’s good to be reminded that “imperfection and fragility are ... to be celebrated,” that we are loved and cherished just the way we are.

One of the most amazing and beautiful things about each and every person here is just how much God loves you—even in all your brokenness—and how much God wants you to have a full and joyous life. This is why God made us to be so resilient. As psychologist Tomás Navarro says, “Everyone faces suffering. But it is the way in which we overcome our troubles and heal our emotional wounds that is key. Far from avoiding living, we must learn to repair ourselves after ... adversity.”²

Through our knowledge of God and faith in the Lord, we are given the tools to overcome our struggles. We need not be frightened of it, but rather we are called to work through it, as we become stronger, more beautiful and forever-cherished by God.

² Tomás Navarro, *Kintsugi: Embrace Your Imperfections and Find Happiness — the Japanese Way*, 2018.

Another thing we see in the art of Kinstugi is that we don't have to hide our emotional, spiritual or physical scars. The pain and suffering we go through is a testament to living a full and authentic life. Instead of trying to hide our scars, we can view them as a badge of courage and strength.

Now, if you're still consumed by an old hurt, one that you just can't get past, pray to God, and let the Lord show you the way forward. Pray that God would send you just the right person, just the right words of healing and redemption. Pray for yourself, that you would be open to receiving the Lord's Spirit of healing and wisdom and guidance. You are far more precious than gold and worthy of the Lord's healing touch and gentle guidance.

Finally, Kintsugi teaches us to be kind, kind to ourselves and kind to others, as we celebrate all of life. All the cracks and missing pieces visible in a bowl repaired using precious gold are really a beautiful reflection of the master potter's love and care. The imperfections are celebrated and valued for their beauty, for all the care and nurture and resilience they signify.

So too, our broken places and the brokenness of those around us are cause for celebration. We can use them to celebrate the love and care God takes in putting us back together, in placing us alongside each other, in valuing us and cherishing us as the works of art that we are in the eyes of God.

So, the next time you feel broken inside or out, turn to the Master Craftsman who is God for healing, wisdom and guidance. The next time you feel gripped by hurts from the past, remember that they are a reflection of your strength and beauty and resilience as a child of God.

And the next time you see someone who is vulnerable and hurting, know that they are valued and precious in God's sight, worthy of the finest gold, worthy of whatever it takes for them to be made whole again, and whatever you can do to help repair the brokenness they suffer. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

We thank you, heavenly Father, for calling us your children, and for showering us with the care and nurture only a mother could give.

We thank you for all the mothers and mother-figures in our lives, and for those showing motherly love and guidance through this church.

We pray your nurture and care for Jennifer Roe Rankin and her family, for Bruce Roe, Leo Bray John Foster, and Will Ratcliff ...

We pray for those in this country distressed and devastated by the news concerning women's health and vitality. Abortion is no one's desire or first choice, Lord, and while we don't pretend to fully know your heart in the matter, we do know that it grieves you terribly when we your children suffer, as women do when medical aid is denied them.

As your children, Lord, we take comfort in knowing how much you care for us, even the tiniest among us. All are precious in your sight, and we trust in you to set all things right, and to guide us in discerning your will.

Continue to raise us up as those who draw ever closer to you. Strengthen our faith, our hope and our love, so that when the fullness of Jesus is revealed we will be like him, seeing him in all his glory.

We pray this in his precious name, using the prayer that he taught us, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**