



Wednesday 29th April 2020 – Beauty in Brokenness

The Welcome

Today's theme is about exploring beauty in the brokenness. We will be reflecting on what this means in our lives and how during the difficult times God is with us and good and beauty can grow in those dark times. We will cultivate an awareness of gratitude and seeking of beauty in each day. Please join in with me the parts in **Bold**.

Opening prayer

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in the suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!
Amen.

Activity ~ Treasure Walk. Take a small ceramic bowl. I invite you to wander and explore and bring the bowl back with something in it. You have twenty minutes for this invitation. As you walk I invite you to meditate on today's scripture reading: *'But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.'*

Share the contents of your cup with somebody else who was on the walk. If you don't have anybody you can do this with why not write about what you collected. ***As usual it is important to have an awareness of what you are collecting, being aware of hazardous/poisonous plants, picking rare species etc. If in doubt don't pick it.*

Reading 2 Corinthians 4.7- 12 Treasure in Clay Jars

'But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.'

Reflection

I'm sure it's not too difficult to think back on times in your own life where there have been difficulties. Perhaps you are even facing specific challenges now during this time of lockdown. Times of brokenness and trial. Whether personally or perhaps those within your family or friendship groups. Within your own church family. The community we live. The world. Life is our own tale of adventures and triumphs and this too can be fully seen in Jesus own life.

Less than 20 days ago we were reading about Jesus being crucified. Jesus was experiencing a brokenness in His relationship with God the Father that He had never before experienced.

I can think of various times of challenge, trial, brokenness in my own life. Being diagnosed with anxiety and depression is one of them. Thankfully I stand here today managing this disease but that has not always been my story. It has taken courage to seek help, speak to professionals and implement strategies to fight. I have learnt much, grown in strength and can use what I've learnt to help others. There is beauty in the brokenness.

Our feelings might be overwhelming and we might have a million questions. And that is OK. When we are beaten down by life we can turn to God as our source of help, hope and healing. Who can make beauty out of brokenness.

As part of our activities today I have suggested for you to go on a treasure walk. To take a ceramic bowl and fill it up. As you are walking I suggested you focus on the scripture from 2 Corinthians Chapter 4 *'But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.'*

I wonder what this verse speaks to you of? I wonder what came to you as you were out on your treasure walk?

You may feel like a fragile jar of clay. Broken and imperfect. But there is treasure within you. Despite being broken and imperfect God chooses to use us and chose to give us his treasure, the Holy Spirit. So that people will see the light which is Him and not us. Let God shine through the cracks in your life.

The Japanese art of kintsugi (KIN-SOO-G) translated 'Golden repair' teaches that broken objects are not something to hide but to display with pride. Precious metal such as gold is used to bring together the pieces of a broken pottery item and at the same time enhance the breaks thus adding value to the broken object. Its beautifies the breakage and treats it as an important part of the objects history. To throw the pot away is to destroy its unique story. To repair it the Kintsugi way is to continue its tale of adventure and triumph. There is beauty in the brokenness.

Just as the cracked earth produces growth, broken clouds produce rain, a mosaic made from broken pieces but still a work of art and a cracked open acorn transforms and becomes a huge Oak tree. So it is with us. From the trials and brokenness in life we grow. We transform. We are changed. It is not the end.

Our scripture reading today goes on to say *'We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but*

not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.'

Our trials and struggles are not the end. God uses them for good. Just as I shared how I now use what I learnt through the difficulties to help others and how it has ultimately strengthened me. But the ultimate outcome is how Jesus has been made visible in my story.

Wild church connects with nature to tell something of God. 'The birch tree is a good symbol of the resurrection. It breaks the ground so that everything else can grow but then it itself then dies because it's overcome by all the stuff that now grows where it's broken the ground.'¹

Jesus crucifixion is what we remember at communion as we break bread together. Jesus body broken for you and for me. Broken for us. Although we are not physically receiving communion at the moment, which for some is a really painful experience, know this does not change what Jesus has done and is still doing for us.

Last year Bishop Graham joined the Diocese of Norwich and wrote words of welcome in the PCC news. I have kept this as he says some very pertinent things including that *"in his experience it's often from the cracks in our lives and the vulnerabilities of our communities' that the light of Christ shines through."*

Is this not more so now than ever? Where are we seeing the light of Christ shining through the cracks in our lives and our communities? Where can we be that light?

Life is our own tale of adventures and triumphs. But Christ calls all of us and can use us wherever we are and however we come. It is Him who can bring Beauty out of our brokenness. To transform, grow, and change us, our churches, our communities. He will not leave you as he finds you however you are free to respond. The choice is yours.

If I may I would like to finish with a story;

Once upon a time, in a not-so-faraway land, there was a kingdom of acorns – a myriad of acorns nestled at the foot of a grand old oak tree.

Since the citizens of this kingdom were modern, and fully Westernised acorns, they went about their business with purposeful energy; and since they were midlife, babyboomer acorns, they engaged in a lot of self-help courses. There were seminars called "Getting All You Can out of Your Shell." There were woundedness and recovery groups for acorns who had been bruised in their original fall from the tree. There were retreats and spas for oiling and polishing those shells and various acornopathic therapies to enhance longevity and well-being.

One day in the midst of this kingdom there suddenly appeared a knotty little stranger, who apparently dropped "out of the blue" by a passing bird. He was odd: capless and dirty, making an immediate negative impression on his fellow acorns. And crouched beneath the oak tree, he stammered out a strange and wild tale. Pointing upward at the tree, he spoke to all that would listen to him, and said, "We...are...that!"

Delusional thinking, obviously, the other acorns concluded.

¹ Wychwood Forest Church interview from Grove Booklet, Forest Church, Cate Williams p.16.

But, one or two of them continued to engage him in conversation: "So tell us, how would we become that tree?" "Well," said he, pointing downward, "it has something to do with going into the ground...and cracking open the shell." "Insane," they responded. "Totally morbid! Why, then we wouldn't be acorns anymore!"

Jesus brings beauty out of brokenness. AMEN.

Activity

It is wonderful to be able to promote the excellent resources Norwich Cathedral Education department have on their website and indeed this next activity is borrowed from their website. Why not try and make a nature mosaic? You can use a template on the website (see resources section) or just create your own. Why not share your picture with us and we can pass onto Norwich Cathedral.

Prayers

For rain and sun and insects to pollinate crops; for farmers who work with nature and preserve the beauty and diversity of God's creation;

ALL: We give thanks, O God.

For the soil, rich and precious, home to countless living creatures which maintain fertility and give us food and life.

ALL: We give thanks, O God.

For growing awareness that we all depend on the earth for our daily food and fuel; and for the increasing numbers of people who want to eat local food and have closer links with food producers.

ALL: We give thanks, O God.

For wisdom to live in ways that will slow down climate change and keep the rains falling in their due season.

ALL: O Lord hear our prayer.

For grace to recognise we are part of God's creation with responsibilities to care for God's earth and our fellow creatures.

ALL: O Lord hear our prayer.

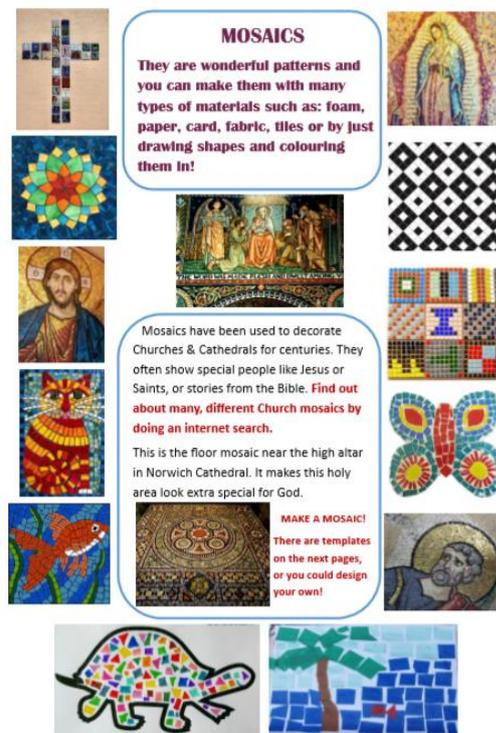
Bring peace to the killing fields of war, turn scorched earth to green, so that people can sow their seeds and harvest their crops and live in harmony with their neighbours.

ALL: Lord send forth your Spirit.

Bring justice to those crushed by debt, forced to grow cash crops for us to consume, tempted to waste fertile land growing drugs and tobacco and denied access to land for growing their own food.

ALL: Lord, send forth your Spirit.

Send us out into the world, in service to God's creatures, as disciples of Jesus who blessed bread and wine at the Last Supper – bread which earth has given and human hands have made and wine, fruit of the vine and work of human hands.



ALL: Lord, send forth your Spirit.

Song- Beautifully broken by Plumb <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ce6PT-3sQGg>

Closing Prayer

Finally, we offer grateful thanks to our God for the fruits of the earth, the down-coming of the rains, the ripening warmth of the sun and the seeds and fruits of every year.

May we always walk gently upon this earth, in right relationship,

- nurtured by your Love
- taking only what we need
- giving back to the earth in gratitude
- sharing what we have
- honouring all with reverence
- reconciling and healing
- mindful of those who will come after
- recognising our proper place as part of your creation.

Grant us the strength and courage, we pray, for such radical transformation into your Kingdom.

Amen.

Resources

Opening prayer - God Of The Poor (Beauty for brokenness) Graham Kendrick Copyright © 1993 Make Way Music, www.grahamkendrick.co.uk

Prayers - <https://greenchristian.org.uk/harvest-festival-liturgy/>

The 'Thanksgiving' is from 'Prayer for Global Restoration' by Michelle Balek of Pax Christi USA.

Nature mosaic idea – Norwich Cathedral Education Department

<https://www.cathedral.org.uk/docs/default-source/default-document-library/here5402541e0c8663e39143ff00009d7e70.pdf?sfvrsn=0>