**Broken Blessings**

**There is a boy here who has with him**

**five barley loaves and two fish;**

**but what are these for all of them?**

**And Jesus took the bread and blessed it,**

**and distributed it to those who were sitting down;**

**likewise the fish also, as much as they wanted.**

**When they were filled, he said to his disciples,**

**Gather up the broken pieces which are left over, so that nothing is lost.**

**And they gathered them up,**

**and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces**

**which were left over by those who ate from five barley loaves.**

**(St. John 6: 9-13)**

**When the air conditioning at Oxford University Botanical Gardens broke down recently, temperatures in the greenhouse climbed. Consequently, a rare cactus produced a beautiful flower. Horticultural scientists had been trying to get the darned thing to bloom for more than 90 years! (Mulligan Stew ‘n Chestnuts, Too, in Catholic Digest)**

**One of Hollywood's favorite comedians got his name because of a fall. Buster Keaton tumbled down the stairs when he was a tot and Houdini saw him. The great magician said “that's a real buster,” and the name stuck. Keaton made a career of falls in comic bits. When he died x-rays showed he had broken every bone in his body at one time or another. But Keaton never wore a cast and once reported to work with a broken back! (Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 14)**

**The hardest – and most personal – sermon I ever gave in 30 years as a rabbi was on Yom Kippur, one year after our son, Aaron, had died at age 14. It’s on this Jewish Day of Atonement that we atone, we make our split, imperfect selves at one. I knew my sermon would have to be a major statement about what losing Aaron had meant to me and to my faith, and how I could go on believing in a world where young children died. I took my text from a little book called The Missing Piece by Shel Silverstein, which I can describe only as a fairy tale for adults. It tells the story of a circle that was missing a piece. A large triangular wedge had been cut out of it. The circle wanted to be whole with nothing missing, so it went around looking for its missing piece. But because it was incomplete and therefore could roll only very slowly, it admired the flowers along the way. It chatted with worms. It enjoyed the sunshine. It found lots of different pieces, but none of them fit. So it left them all by the side of the road and kept on searching. Then one day the circle found a piece that fit perfectly. It was so happy. Now it could be whole, with nothing missing. It incorporated the missing piece into itself and began to roll. Now that it was a perfect circle, it could roll very fast, too fast to notice the flowers or talk to the worms. When it realized how different the world seemed when it rolled so quickly, it stopped, left its found piece by the side of the road and rolled slowly away. The lesson of the story, I suggested, was that in some strange sense we are more whole when we are missing something. The man who has everything is in some ways a poor man. He will never know what it feels like to yearn, to hope, to nourish his soul with the dream of something better. He will never know the experience of having someone who loves him give him something he has always wanted and never had. There is a wholeness about the person who has come to terms with his limitations, who has been brave enough to let go of his unrealistic dreams and not feel like a failure for doing so. There is a wholeness about the man or woman who has learned that he or she is strong enough to go through a tragedy and survive, who can lose someone and still feel like a complete person. You have been through the worst and came through intact. *(Harold S. Kushner, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Even a broken clock is right twice a day. *(Quoted in Divine Science Church of Creative Life newsletter)***

**Son: “Hey, Max! What did you get for Christmas.” Max: “I can’t remember.” Son: “It was just last week.” Max: “I seem to forget things as soon as they break.” Son: “You’ve already broken everything you got?” Max: “Except for the underwear and socks, but I’m trying hard to forget those too.” *(Jerry Bittle, in Shirley & Son comic strip)***

**Pierre Omidyar founded eBay in September 1995 in his California home. He called his business AuctionWeb and meant it to be a marketplace where individuals could buy and sell goods and services. Omidyar got things started by selling a broken laser pointer for about $14. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken. *(James Dent, in Charleston, West Virginia Gazette)***

**Doris Day started her career as a dancer. She turned to singing only after a broken leg put her in the hospital for a month. *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 26)***

**A husband and wife, married many years, had planned to enjoy life and travel. But only a month after he retired, the husband suddenly died. All of life seemed to end for that widow. And on her husband's tombstone she had engraved the words: “The light of my life has gone out.” But with the passage of time and the encouragement and counsel of friends, her life came alive again. Two years later her pastor joined her in marriage to another good man and watched them as they enthusiastically anticipated building a new life together. Later she went to her pastor and said, “I'm going to have to change that inscription on my first husband's tombstone.” “No,” replied the pastor. “I think all you have to do is add one more line: “I struck another match!” No matter what happens to us, there is always something left to live for. Broken lives can be rebuilt. What do you do when your world caves in?” If you have faith in the goodness of God and in His power to change the course of your life, you never give up on life. An inscription found on a small gravestone after a devastating air raid on Britain in World War II gained much attention. People thought it must be a famous quotation, but it wasn't. The words were written by a lonely old lady whose pet was killed by a bomb. They read: “There is not enough darkness in** all the **world to put out the light of one small candle.” And we have the Light of life!** **(M. P. *Horban*, in Pentecostal Evangel)**

**During a speaking engagement in Battle Creek, Michigan, Mr. J. C. Penney broke out with a serious rash, later identified as shingles. Unable to sleep and in great physical pain, the retailer consulted with an old friend, Elmer Eggleston, a physician. Dr. Eggleston insisted upon hospitalizing him in the world famous Kellogg Sanitarium in Battle Creek. There, day and night, nurses were assigned to constantly watch over Mr. Penney. His doctor ordered that he be kept heavily sedated, hoping that rest and sleep would bring some relief. However, nothing helped. “I got weaker day by day,” he said. “I was broken nervously and physically, filled with despair, unable to see even a ray of hope. I had nothing to live for. I felt I hadn’t a friend left in the world, that even my family had turned against me.” He was deeply depressed and very weak, both emotionally and physically. He slept little and awoke convinced that it was the last night of his life. He wrote farewell letters to his wife and son, stating he did not expect to live to see the dawning of a new day. After writing the letters, he managed to sleep, but was astonished to find himself still alive the next morning. “To awake again was a strange kind of surprise. In some vague way I knew there must be a reason,” he observed. At that point, he left his room and made his way downstairs where he heard singing coming from the hospital chapel. He recognized the lyrics of an old, familiar hymn that they sang – “God will take care of you.” Curiosity and desperation drew him into the chapel where he sat alone listening to the words of the hymn. What took place in his life during those moments of singing is striking and memorable. Mr. Penney reported: “Suddenly - something happened. I can't explain it. I can only call it a miracle. I felt as if I had been instantly lifted out of the darkness of a dungeon into warm, brilliant sunlight. I felt as if I had been transported from hell to paradise. I felt the power of God as I had never felt it before...I am seventy-one years old, and the most dramatic and glorious twenty minutes of my life were those I spent in that chapel that morning: ‘God will take care of you.’ Those brief moments completely transformed his life. A weight lifted from my spirit. I came out of that room a different man, renewed. I had gone in bowed in paralysis of spirit, utterly adrift. I came forth with a soaring sense of release, from a bondage of gathering death to a pulse of hopeful living. I had glimpsed God,” he said. *(Victor M. Parachin, in Unity magazine)***

**For several centuries, down through many dynasties, a village was known for its exquisite and fragile porcelain. Especially striking were its urns: high as tables, wide as chairs, they were admired around the globe for their strong form and delicate beauty. Legend has it that when each urn was finished, there was one final step. The artist broke it and then put it back together with gold filigree. An ordinary urn was then transformed into a priceless work of art. What seemed finished wasn’t . . . until it was broken. *(Robert Kriegel and Louis Patler, in If It Ain’t Broke . . . Break It!)***

**Truth always originates in a minority of one, and every custom begins as a broken precedent. *(Will Durant)***

**A New Yorker came across a variation on the basic “No Radio” sign in the window of a parked car: “I'm not going to lie to you. I do have a radio, but it's broken. Actually, it’s stuck on one station -- WQXR. So unless you like classical music, it doesn't make sense for you to break into my car. I am planning to get the radio fixed, maybe even add a tape player. I'll keep you posted.” (Jim Witkin, in Reader's Digest)**

**Grandma: “Now look what you've done! This is the third TV remote you've either broken or lost this month. I guess we'll have to go buy another one.” Grandpa: “I'm way ahead of you. It's amazing how inexpensive they are when you order in bulk.” *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)***

**A broken romance may lead to a new, more enduring relationship; a loss of job may lead to finding new, more satisfying employment; school failure may lead to a change of career; losing a ball game may strengthen a sense of teamwork. Defeat is not synonymous with failure unless we allow it to be. *(Charles Dickson, in New Realities magazine)***

**It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength.  It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume -- it is Peter, weeping bitterly, who returns to greater power than ever. *(Vance Havner, in By The Still Waters)***

**The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again. *(Alan Paton, South African author)***

**Break a vase, and the love that assembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. *(Derek Walcott, poet)***

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