

What Does A Follower Of Jesus Look Like?: Broken

Luke 22:24-34

Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

October 27, 2013

AUDIO - <http://fbcjc.buzzsprout.com/7678/125530-broken>

We begin this morning with a picture of a sieve, a primitive device for separating the good grain from the chaff or waste. It's a pan or bowl with holes in the bottom, so the good kernels can be separated from the debris. Jesus uses this image in v. 31 of our text, to warn Simon Peter and the others about the brokenness that will come. And it won't be gentle. It will be violent and it will be intense.

Many things break us. Fractured relationships can do it. The quarreling among the disciples in vv. 24ff happens right after the Last Supper, when Jesus has bared his soul about his own loving sacrifice. All the disciples want to talk about is who among them is the greatest. Jesus flips around the common definition of greatness. Greatness belongs to the one who serves, not the one waited upon. And when we are in squabbles like this, and get a good look at our own egos, our pride, we are embarrassed and (hopefully) broken.

We may also be broken by the times we fail the Lord, when we deny him or turn our backs on the way, when we cease following him. Jesus warns Simon Peter about the upcoming "sifting" during Jesus' trial and Simon Peter's denial. It will be a time of brokenness.

And by the way, do you know the Latin word for a sieve, the word used by the Romans? It is "tribulum," from which we get our word tribulation. One temptation when we are going through a tough time is to "awful-ize" it, to make it bigger than God. We become preoccupied with it. That struggle needs to be set in the larger context of God, and God's care in Christ. Eric Liddell, the famous Olympic runner immortalized in the movie, "Chariots of Fire," said this: "Circumstances may appear to wreck our lives and God's plans, but God is not helpless among the ruins. Our broken lives are not lost or useless. God's love is still working" [Disciplines of the Christian Life, Eric Liddell].

So when that violent shaking is happening, isn't it soothing to hear and know that Jesus knows us by name and that he is praying for us? (v. 32). Hebrews 7:25 declares that he "ever lives to make intercessions for us." He has prayed for us...already, before the storm comes! No matter your struggle, Jesus is praying for you. No matter what you are going through, Jesus is praying for you.

But there's another piece to this. Brokenness is a community project. Healing is a community project. And following Jesus through the pain and brokenness is a community project. We need the church. We need each other in the broken times. I want to show you something. In v. 31, the "all of you" is plural. The sifting, the brokenness is happening to everyone. But the "you" in v. 32 is singular. You, Simon. You are to return stronger than you were and help others. Simon is to "strengthen" others (v. 32), a word that means to stabilize or resolutely set.

Someone has suggested the image of a team of mountain climbers. You are never alone on the mountain. There is someone up, higher than you, finding the place for footing and holding the rope. But there are also people below us, counting on us to hold the rope and show them the proper places for footing. Peter had Jesus and others ahead of him. Now he (Simon Peter) is to help others.

Ray Oldenburg is an urban sociologist who has written the book *Celebrating The Third Place*. He says the first place is home. The second place is work. Third places are neutral space, voluntary, informal, happy gatherings. A place to connect with friends, to build relationships and be yourself. You want to know why Starbucks is so successful? Why are other coffee shops successful? I recently heard Leonard Sweet say that every Starbucks is an indictment of the church. We've been in the doctrine business, the creed business or the belief business, but we were supposed to be in the relationship business. Think about vv. 24-27, the disciples quarreling--relationships. Think about Peter's brokenness and how Jesus will heal him and then challenge him to help others--relationships.

The other thing to notice in our text is how Jesus was focused on the future. At a time when he himself was being broken and had every right to be focused on the past or at least the present, he was looking ahead, discipling Peter by preparing him to deal with his brokenness. And Peter in turn would disciple others for a greater future. Here's a great statement I picked up somewhere: **EVERY CHURCH NEEDS TO THINK ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION**. Are we? I hope so. By our commitment to evangelism and missions. By our discipleship emphasis of LOVE-GROW-SERVE. By our diversity of worship styles. By our commitment to children and youth ministry.

My personal testimony bears repeating occasionally. I was a boy of about 14 when Fred Harner came to pastor our little church in North Missouri, a weekend pastorate. Fred and Shirley were preparing for the mission field, attending William Jewell College, then seminary, working nights and pastoring on weekends. When God called me to preach, Fred and Shirley intentionally stayed at our little church longer in order to disciple me, even though it meant delaying their arrival to the mission field by a year or two. Why did they do that? Because **EVERY CHURCH NEEDS TO THINK ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION**.

I heard the story of two followers of Jesus who met each week for discipling. One was mentoring the other, the new believer. The mentor asked at the beginning of their time, "Tell me about your struggles and failures this past week." The new Christian, assuming it was a bad thing to have brokenness, simply replied, "I didn't have any." The mentor responded, "OK, let me tell you about mine." Yes, in our brokenness and failure, we follow Jesus. Let's follow Jesus.