

LEADING WITH BROKENNESS

Christ the Rock

November 22, 2015

BIBLE READING – Judges 6:11-27

INTRODUCTION

Greeting

Good morning! Today is week 3 of our current series, *Make Us Brave* – Chris has been walking us through the process of embracing vulnerability, acknowledging brokenness and inviting one another into the deepest parts of our hearts and lives.

This call to honesty, authenticity and vulnerability often feels scary, distasteful and profoundly antithetical to our cultural instincts. Our flesh is prone to push back hard against it. Many of us nod our heads “yes” on Sunday morning and then feel an irresistible urge to run home and bolt the doors in fear. No one wants their deepest flaws and darkest secrets to be laid bare to those around them – we’re afraid of being found out, afraid of being judged and condemned – afraid of failing, falling short, disappointing those we love – afraid of losing control, being misunderstood and living in constant shame.

And yet, we’ve been reminded that acknowledging our brokenness positions us perfectly to experience God’s grace. That sharing our brokenness with others opens the door for authentic relationships that lead to compassion, healing, redemption and hope. More than that, we’ve actually seen this posture of vulnerability modeled up front from those God has called to lead us.

But we're going to take this call to embrace our brokenness one step further.
Today we're going to explore what it means to lead with our brokenness.

For too long, Christian culture has propagated this idea of the Godly leader who has it all together. Which means that if I want to do great things for the God, first I better get it together. And I once I've failed at that enough, well then I must resign myself to pretending I've got it all together – in hopes that I can still make some sort of impact for Jesus before I'm found out, embarrassed, ostracized and left alone in my failure.

But what if our brokenness isn't a threat to our ability to do great things for Jesus? What if it's *the key* to unlocking our ability to do great things for Jesus?

This morning I believe Jesus wants to show us that uncovering our brokenness does more than position us to be recipients of His grace – **it also enables us all to be ministers of His power.** Pray with me that God would make it so.

PRAYER

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

Story of cycling with Ryan up the Western Hills in Kunming, China. "No, it's ok. I'm actually really glad. I've never seen you not be good at something."

Story of health problems after China / God stripping me of all of my strengths – my extraverted personality, my confidence, my ability to lead – which led to an important truth I had never actually believed: "I feel like I have nothing to offer anyone."

I had always been broken, but for the first time I wasn't able to hide it from everyone else.

BIBLE – Judges 6:11-27

3 Observations about Gideon:

1) Gideon was broken.

We see throughout this passage that Gideon felt afraid of the Midianites, uncertain if God really wanted to use him, and unqualified to lead. By the standards of men, he was the last person God should have chosen to lead His people to deliverance.

Examples of Gideon's brokenness: (vs 11) We find him harvesting wheat in a winepress – hiding in fear. (vs 13) He believes God has abandoned him and his people. (vs 15) Gideon sees himself as weak and unimportant. (vs 27 and later in vs 36 with the fleece) Even after Gideon responds to God's call He struggles with fear and doubt.

In vs 12-14 we see that Gideon is broken, but God calls Gideon's weakness strength. But why?

LESSON 1: Brokenness doesn't disqualify you from being used by God.

Brokenness is actually the space necessary for God's strength to be made visible in us. It is the fertile soil where God's transformational power is sown.

2) Gideon's brokenness wasn't just about him.

In Gideon's brokenness we see a reflection of the fears and flaws of the entire people of Israel – feelings of smallness and insignificance, fear of suffering or destruction and despair that God had completely abandoned them.

Earlier in Ch 6, we read that all of the Israelites had retreated into the mountains and caves because the Midianites continually attacked them and repeatedly stole their crops and livestock. The Midianites are described as being "...like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted...".

We see this spirit of fear manifested again after Gideon has gathered an army of over 30,000 men to fight the enemy in Chapter 7. God tells Gideon to reduce the size of the army by asking anyone who is fearful or trembling (vs 3) to go home – over two thirds of his army leaves. Now, I'm trying to imagine a scenario in which of tens of thousands of men openly admit their fear and cowardice in front of their friends and family and desert them. Clearly the brokenness that crippled Gideon was endemic of all of Israel.

LESSON 2: Your brokenness connects you to those Jesus longs to save.

Owning our complete and continual need for Jesus' grace and healing invites others to experience His grace and healing too.

3) God worked *through* Gideon's brokenness, not just in spite of it.

This is maybe one the hardest truths for us to accept. And it's difficult for good reason, because it almost sounds like a glorification of our brokenness – reveling in the possible benefits of our faults and flaws rather than being grieved by sin.

Let's be clear – sin is tragic and toxic. It's the most destructive force in our lives. But admitting our sin is very different from glorifying it. And it is through *that* action – the admission, the transparency, the owning of our brokenness – that God often demonstrates His power and healing not just to us, but also to those around us.

So how does God do this in the story of Gideon?

Israel is afraid. Israel is weak. They're hiding in caves. And they're comically outnumbered by their enemies. Gideon is the poster child for this small, fearful, insignificant Israel. And God chooses Gideon to lead His people out of oppression. Not through raising up a massive army to overcome the Midianites. Not through great acts of strength and valor. But through a few hundred men sneaking up in the night, breaking some jars, blowing some trumpets and screaming at their enemy. A giant army of soldiers ready for war vs a small company of men, hiding in the dark, armed with flashlights and noisemakers. The weakness of Gideon became the means by which God saved His people – and God received all the glory because of it.

LESSON 3: Jesus doesn't want to eliminate our brokenness. He wants to redeem it. He wants to make it valuable.

Your greatest weakness may be the vehicle of God's greatest ministry to those around you.

EXAMPLES

We may be tempted to say now, "Well, that's fine for Gideon, but what does that have to do with me? One man's story doesn't dictate how God will work through my life."

But amazingly the story of Gideon is repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments – the people we celebrate as heroes of our faith, upon closer inspection, were often used by God through their brokenness, rather than in spite of it.

- **Abraham**, a man handicapped by old age, infertility, and a severe lack of faith was chosen by God to be the father of many nations. (Genesis 17:15-18)
- **Moses**, a man who fled Egypt in fear and was incredibly insecure in his own ability to speak was chosen by God to be a spokesperson, speaking on behalf of God to Pharaoh to bring about the deliverance of God's people. (Exodus 4:10-13)
- **David**, a shepherd, who was the youngest and smallest of his brothers and untrained as a soldier, was chosen by God to defeat the giant Philistine Goliath and become the King of Israel.
- **Peter**, a common, uneducated fisherman who had a history of stepping out brashly only to retreat in fear was chosen by Jesus to be an apostle, one the most influential leaders of the early Church and the first to preach the Gospel on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 4:13)
- **Paul**, an arrogant, self-righteous religious leader, a persecutor of the early Church who traveled to find, imprison and kill followers of Jesus was chosen by Jesus to travel to the ends of the earth to share the Gospel with the Gentiles. (1 Timothy 1:12-17, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, 2 Corinthians 9-10)

ILLUSTRATION

Story of my brokenness in marriage – my struggle to connect with my wife’s heart because of the own fears and insecurities. In conflict I was so afraid of being misjudged or mischaracterized, I would incessantly argue over facts and try to defend myself, rather than being secure in my value and identity in Jesus and being able to listen to my Christy’s pain and wounding and comfort her / encourage her.

This past summer we started seeing a marriage counselor. This has been a tremendously humbling but important process of recognizing my brokenness and the ways God wants to change me and use me as a husband and father.

APPLICATION

Examples of Brokenness / Weakness:

Doubting God's goodness or faithfulness
Finding your value in talents or abilities instead of Jesus
Fear and insecurity affecting your decision-making
Poor stewardship of your finances and belongings
Bitterness or unforgiveness hurting your relationships
Unhealthy addiction to television or social media
Medicating pain with food, drugs or alcohol
Struggling with lust, pornography or sexual sin
Projecting a false image of yourself

3 TRUTHS:

- 1) I am not alone in my brokenness.**
- 2) Those around me need my brokenness.**
- 3) Brokenness is a vehicle for Holy Spirit power in and through my life.**

CONCLUSION

We are all broken people. But for too long we've hidden our brokenness, paralyzed by fear of others discovering our weaknesses.

The good news of the Gospel is that our our brokenness is actually an amazing opportunity – an opportunity to experience the unending depths of God's grace, an opportunity to experience healing and hope in community with others, and an opportunity to become minister's of God's transformational power to a broken world.

When we lead in our weakness, we make room for Jesus who is strong.

COMMUNION