**The Salvation Army**

**Worship Workout**

**24 January 2021**

 **Broken?**

**Welcome to our 2021 Vision and Commitment Series looking at God’s Covenant.**

***““The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.”***

***(Jeremiah 31:31)***

***For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.***

***(Hebrews 9:15)***

******

**Call to worship**

Leader: God said, “I will be your God.”

**All: God has promised. God remembers. God is faithful.**

Leader: God said, “I will lead you in the paths of truth.”

**All: God has promised. God remembers. God is faithful.**

Leader: God said, “I will forgive you.”

**All: God has promised. God remembers. God is faithful.**

Leader: God said, “My kingdom is near.”

**All: God has promised. God remembers. God is faithful.**

**Theme for the week**

In the third of our meetings on the theme of Covenant, we look at brokenness. In the bible we see many occasions on which God’s people have broken their covenant with him. But this new covenant, forged through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means that we are restored to God, even in our sin and failures. God keeps covenant for us through Jesus: he keeps covenant relentlessly because he loves us and considers us each precious to him. Hallelujah to that!

***No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,”***

***declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:34)***

**Opening song: Lord, I come before your throne of grace (378)**

Lord, I come before Your throne of grace; I find rest in Your presence, And fulness of joy.

In worship and wonder, I behold Your face, Singing what a faithful God have I.

*What a faithful God have I, What a faithful God.*

*What a faithful God have I, Faithful in every way.*

Lord of mercy, You have heard my cry; Through the storm You're the beacon, My song in the night.

In the shelter of Your wings, Hear my heart's reply, Singing what a faithful God have I.

Lord all sovereign, granting peace from heaven, Let me comfort those who suffer With the comfort You have given.

I will tell of Your great love for as long as I live, Singing what a faithful God have I.

*(Robert and Dawn Critchley)*

**Transformative prayer: Broken and blessed**

This morning we are thinking about brokenness and restoration. The ravaged earth and the world we have created has much brokenness within it: wars, famine, environmental damage, huge gap between the rich and poor, trafficking, and many more things that I am sure you may have on your heart today.

Jesus is the answer to our brokenness, through him we are redeemed and restored. This morning, there is an opportunity to bring those things that are on your heart to Jesus and to ask him to transform them: to take them from broken to blessed. Try and visualise the blessing needed, not the brokenness encountered. What would the situation or person look like in blessing? Picture it and pray it this morning.

**Let’s pray…Song: Beauty for brokenness (998)**

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.

Shelter for fragile lives, Cures for their ills;

Work for the craftsman, Trade for their skills;

Land for the dispossessed, Rights for the weak;

Voices to plead the cause, Of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor, Friend of the weak, Give us compassion we pray;*

*Melt our cold hearts, Let tears fall like rain;*

*Come, change our love, From a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars, Havens from fear;

Cities for sanctuary, Freedoms to share;

Peace to the killing-fields, Scorched earth to green;

Christ for the bitterness, His cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth, Oceans and streams;

Plundered and poisoned, Our future, our dreams;

Lord, end our madness, Carelessness, greed;

Make us content with, The things that we need.

Lighten our darkness, Breathe on this flame;

Until your justice burns, Brightly again;

Until the nations, Learn of Your ways;

Seek Your salvation, And bring You their praise.

*(Graham Kendrick)*

**Prayer**

God of love, help us to live beyond our experiences of suffering and to respond to acts of harm with mercy rather than vengeance. Guide us as we seek opportunities for reconciliation and transformation, and give us the grace to stand against a culture of violence for a world of peace.

Amen.

**Scripture reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord.

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

**Activity: Broken and blessed…**

Due to our sin and disobedience we, like the Israelites before us often don’t live in the way that God would want us to. We are broken.

But through Jesus, the new Covenant, our brokenness is forgiven. We are blessed.

As we think about brokenness and blessedness, try to think of a way in which we are blessed for each of the letters of the word BROKEN. Try to do it in one word, but more may be needed for each letter! See how you get on…

Then spend some time thanking God for those blessings.

*When upon life’s billows you are tempest-tossed,*

*When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,*

*Count your many blessings, name them one by one,*

*And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.*

(from *Count your blessings* by *Johnson Oatman)*

**Song 3: Purify my heart (517)**

Purify my heart, Let me be as gold and precious silver.

Purify my heart, Let me be as gold, pure gold.

*Refiner's fire,*

*My heart's one desire*

*Is to be... holy;*

*Set apart for You, Lord.*

*I choose to be... holy;*

*Set apart for You, my Master,*

*Ready to do Your will.*

Purify my heart, Cleanse me from within, And make me holy.

Purify my heart, Cleanse me from my sin, deep within.

*(Brian Doerkson)*

**Workout Wondering**

God loves you…

Now, I can make a good bet that that is not the most surprising thing you have ever heard me, or anyone else, say from the platform, pulpit, front of the church…? I would make a second good bet that you have heard it many times…and I want you to hear it, really hear it again this morning.

Because ‘God loves people’ and ‘God loves you’ is the reality that informs and drives the idea of covenant. Rather than being a deal or a bargaining position between two parties, covenant is the foundation of an everlasting relationship between us and God – and God is relentless in his loving movement towards us. And he is relentless in his loving movement, despite our inadequacies and our inability to be obedient. Even when our side of the covenant lies broken and shattered through sin and disobedience, God does not give up on us, or love us less, no…in the subversive, wrong way round, upside down-ness of the Kingdom of God, he restores us from our brokenness into something even more precious than before.

Let me illustrate this for you. When we break a pot or plate, we think, oh what a shame, we sweep it up carefully and put it in the bin, making a mental note to replace it. It is not fit for purpose, so it is disposed of. Now, the Japanese have an ancient tradition called Kintsugi, where rather than discarding broken pottery, it is bound together again using gold, silver or platinum.

This tradition celebrates the unique history of each piece by emphasising its fractures and breaks instead of hiding or disguising them, or making them a reason to discard the whole piece – indeed it often makes the repaired piece even more beautiful than the original, revitalising it with new life…

…and that is exactly how God views our failures and our brokenness – he doesn’t discard us or leave us broken, no, he stands ready to forgive and restore us with something even more precious than gold or silver or platinum – his unending grace and lavish love given through the life-saving blood of Jesus.

Let’s look at three elements of brokenness and see God at work in each:

**Broken covenants**

In all our study of biblical covenants over the past couple of weeks it has been notable that God has never failed to keep covenant, humans have been the ones to break it.

Whereas previously the breaking of covenant by humans has resulted in covenant being spoiled, God has made this new covenant, in Christ, something completely different. Because this new covenant, in Christ, is not contractual, it does not rely on compliance from both parties - no, as Jeremiah suggests in v33, God is doing something new: ***This is the brand-new covenant that I will make with Israel when the time comes. I will put my law within them—write it on their hearts!—and be their God. And they will be my people.***

And this is part of the topsy-turvy Kingdom message that is so powerful and life-changing. God does all the running in spite of us, and indeed in spite of our inability to be what he would have us be. God does not throw us away like a broken piece of previously pristine pottery, rather he has created the means for the covenant to be restored and be made good again – with something even more precious than gold or silver or platinum – with the redeeming blood of Christ Jesus, our saviour. In Jesus, we have forgiveness. In Jesus, we can fail and still stand before God blameless and holy. ***I’ll wipe the slate clean for each of them. I’ll forget they ever sinned!” God’s Decree (Jeremiah 31:34)***

**Broken Justice**

God’s covenant love is underpinned not by retributive (punishment based) justice, but restorative justice.

Most of society’s understanding of justice is based on the principle of people getting the punishment they deserve for the crimes they have committed. And this is a strong base for a legal or judicial system, but perhaps sometimes falls short of feeling ‘fair’ and often does not address causes of behaviour or crime.

Restorative justice however is aimed at healing and restoring people. Parental love is a good place to start in explaining what this love is like and how it works, as we sang last week of our: Good, good father.

A good parent does not expect their child to merit or earn their love; the parent realises that little children aren’t capable of earning love and care by behaving or performing to order – that would be cruel indeed. Rather in loving the child despite mistakes and obedience, they develop in the child the capacity to know and reciprocate love. Both the parent and the child are transformed by this kind of relationship – it is an extraordinary outcome and topsy- turvy to what we think can be achieved in this situation – which is simply to correct behaviour through consequence.

That’s right - God has a totally different and outrageous plan people! *Agape love…*unconditional, restorative love.

Now, I’m a huge fan of agape love, I often describe it as magic because it is capable of so many unimaginably extraordinary things. God’s agape love (which remember is love from its source) has the power to transform situations and heal the damage that is done to relationships through human bad behaviour. And this way of loving others, in spite of broken trust and broken expectations and broken agreements, can be personally costly and may even hurt (pride mostly maybe). And THIS, yes THIS is the way in which God loves us: in spite of broken trust and broken expectations and broken agreements. And it cost God hugely to love us in this way: it cost His Son. And it must have hurt him and hurt him still: not only to watch His Son on the Cross disfigured in such a way by sin, but to know that some people will never come to love him back, will never reach out for him, will never be restored to him. I mean: such love, real agape love that just takes your breath away; reckless, unconditional and its available to you today, yes even you!

**Finally, broken bread.**

At the last supper Jesus announces a new covenant in v20. His willingness to lay down his life underlines the radical basis for relationship that will heal and transform the world.

***Taking bread, he blessed it, and broke it…***

The breaking and blessing of the bread imply that brokenness and healing (death and resurrection) are key components of human relationships and the means by which humanity will flourish and thrive. Jesus’ brokenness (his death on the Cross) is a means of blessing others (eternal salvation); our brokenness can too be used to bless others as we are restored by him who is the new covenant of God’s love for each one of us.

So, this morning I have a couple of questions for you:
1) Are you feeling broken in your relationship with God this morning? Do you need to ask him to administer his precious gifts of love and grace to you today, in the name of Jesus, the new covenant?

2) As a Church we are called to bring God’s restorative love to the rest of the world (‘light on a hill’); we are called to be a loving, tolerant, accepting and inclusive community of people like nothing else on the planet. How are we doing this in our communities? Consider how your brokenness could bring blessing to others?

******Go and be that blessing; you are redeemed by Christ, restored to God, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit – perfect, pristine and priceless to God.

*(Wow, catch your breath…)*

**Response song: Lord, I come to you (601)**

Lord I come to You

Let my heart be changed, renewed

Flowing from the grace, That I've found in You.

Lord I've come to know

The weaknesses I see in me

Will be stripped away

By the power of Your love

*Hold me close, Let Your love surround me;*

*Bring me near, Draw me to Your side.*

*And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle;*

*And I will soar with You, Your Spirit leads me on,*

*By the power of Your love.*

Lord unveil my eyes

Let me see You face to face

The knowledge of Your love, As You live in me.

Lord renew my mind

As Your will unfolds in my life

In living every day

By the power of Your love

*(Darlene Zschech)*

**Closing Prayer**

God our Father, thank you for the new covenant given through your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you that through his sacrificial death we can know forgiveness of sins and the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit. The new covenant means that we can call you ‘Abba, Father’ and know your unconditional and restorative love. Thank you, Lord, for your amazing love and grace. Father God, may we live in the truth of the new covenant, as your redeemed people. May we bring your new and loving touch to those things around us that are broken and in need of your blessing.

Amen.

**Benediction**

For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

“I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

(2 Corinthians 5:16)