

How Jesus Ministers to Our Broken Hearts

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Hi, everybody and welcome! My name is Mary Lenaburg and it is an absolute joy and privilege to be with you. In this talk, we're going to be talking about what it is to be broken hearted and how Jesus comes to us in our broken heartedness and how he administers to us as we walk through these seasons of challenge and difficulty. But before we get started, let's go ahead and ask the Holy Spirit into our time together as we pray the Come, Holy Spirit prayer, join me.

Come Holy Spirit

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. And kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the Earth. Oh God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My Family's Story

Jesus comes for the broken hearted. How is this true for those of us who have been broken hearted? How can we cling closer to Jesus through our sadness and our pain? For those of you who don't know me, or my story, I have had the great privilege of being married to my husband Jerry for more than 30 years now. We were blessed with four souls, two we did not get to keep that we lost to miscarriage, and two we did. Our son Jonathan is now married and living with his beautiful wife, Jessica. And we pray and hope that the Lord will bless them with a family soon. And our daughter Courtney. She was born with a seizure disorder. At about the age of five weeks, it was discovered. And that led to profound disabilities. She was wheelchair bound, non-verbal and she was with us this side of heaven for 22 years.

So, walking through those 22 years and then walking through her death seven years ago left me with a shattered heart. It wasn't just broken, it was shattered. And I had to figure out a way to reconcile my broken heartedness and my grief with God and who He was as a good and loving God. And so, I kind of wanted to share with you how I did that, and how I continue to do that seven years now after that moment of my daughter's last breath.

How does God Accompany the Broken Hearted?

So, we think of this idea of the Refiner's fire, right? In Sirach it says gold is tested by fire. All the impurities come out. And that's what broken heartedness is, right? That's what grief is. It's that hot suffering that we can't escape that is necessary for healing, right? And what does God say about going through the Refiner's fire? And how does he accompany us who are broken hearted? There are three things that I want to talk to you about within this.

The first one is that God sees you. He sees you, he sees your turmoil, he sees your pain, he sees your grief, he sees your broken heartedness and he remains with you through it. He does not abandon you, not ever. You may not feel his presence from time to time, but he is there, he is moving mountains that you are not even aware of. God never ever leaves us or forsakes us. He remains.

The second thing is that I want you to know that God cares about you and your broken heart. Many of us feel ashamed when we're broken hearted, like we've lost our faith and we don't want to go to God. And we don't want to lament to Him, we don't want to complain to Him. Well, I just tossed that out the window about year, I don't know, six months into the whole grief process. I lament. It's one of the most beautiful prayers that we can do in the church. King David showed us how to lament all through the Psalms. The first thing we do is we cry out to the Lord and say hi, I'm Mary, I'm broken hearted, and I am lamenting and I need you to listen, right? We call out to Him. The second thing we do is we lay our hearts out before Him. We lay our complaints out before Him. We put it all out there and we're like Lord, you took my daughter. Like what am I supposed to do now? I got fired from being a mom. Like what do you want from me? And I laid it out for him. I lamented. And I just, I found myself alone in my broken heartedness until I surrendered it to him and once I surrendered it to him, I began to feel His mercy, His grace. And that healing slowly but surely began.

God will bring you; this is the third thing; God will bring you to a place of joy and peace. He will wipe away your tears. But it does not mean that that grief and that broken heartedness goes away. It becomes sometimes a part of us, and a part of our story and we learn how to live with it, and we make friends with it and we walk in purpose with it.

Someone once asked me probably two or three years ago if I was ever going to get over it. Was I ever going to get over my daughter's death? My answer is quite simple. No. No. I will never stop grieving for my little girl. I will never forget her. I will never forget the lessons she taught me. I will never be full and whole until I am in heaven with her, praising the Lord for an eternity. I will, I am broken hearted.

But how do I persevere through this valley of the shadow of doubt, this valley of death, this valley of tears? How do I do it? Because I still have breath within me, which means God still has work for me to do. So how am I supposed to do this if I am grieving, if I am broken hearted? Well, first thing I do is I pick up my Bible and I read scripture every day. I read his Word. I learn who I am in him and who he is in me. And I am constantly reminded that he remains with me and that he's working through my sadness and my grief, and that he will not leave me where I am because he loves me too much to do so. *"Love does not leave you where you are."* It's a great quote by the writer Bob Goff. Doesn't leave you because he loves you too much.

Perspective is Everything

The second thing is perspective is everything. Perspective is everything. Do I want my daughter back? Of course, I would love to have her back. Is that the best thing for Courtney? No, it's not the best thing for Courtney. She is in heaven praising our Lord Jesus. She is free, she's no longer in pain, she's not scared. She is loving Jesus 24/7. She is with her beloved. So, my perspective is

everything. It doesn't change my grief, it doesn't change my broken heartedness, but it brings me peace, it brings me some sense of joy to know where she is and how God is loving her, and she is loving Him.

Guard Your Heart during Brokenness

The third thing is I guard my heart when that grief comes, and the suffering exposes my weakness. I guard my heart. What does that mean to guard your heart? Well, I kind of go inward a little bit. I sort of protect myself because I'm in a very vulnerable position in that moment. And people can hurt you unwittingly. And things can happen that create more distress. So, when I'm in a season of deep grief, when that grief kind of bubbles up to the surface and my broken heartedness is present, I tend to get quiet, I tend to withdraw, and to my memories and to my journal and to scripture and to the Sacraments and I rest in that until that passes and I am stronger. I keep an eternal perspective.

We are just sojourners here, right? Isn't that what Paul says? We're on a journey. We're not meant to be here. We're meant to be in heaven but because of the sins of our first parents, we're here. We're going through death. There's a beautiful quote, "Oh, death, where is your sting?" Courtney taught me that eternal perspective. If I didn't have it before, I certainly do now. I want to be in heaven. I want to be with God. I had a dream once where I died and I was at the gates of heaven and Jesus was there, and I kind of looked at Him and I said, "I'm so happy to see you but where's Courtney?" And then my daughter comes forward and says, "Seriously, mom? Like, it's Jesus. I'll wait." Like another lesson from my daughter in a silly dream. It's not me getting to heaven to be with Courtney, it's me getting to heaven to be with Jesus, with God the Father, the Holy Spirit, the saints and the angels. An eternal perspective. I'm able to submit my broken heartedness and my grief to the Lord because I know one day they will be gone.

Praise God while in the Storm

Praise Him in the storm. That's the fifth and final thing. Praise Him in the storm, y'all. When you are going through grief, when you are going through crisis, when you are going through difficulty, your marriage is in trouble, your children are in trouble, your health is bad, you've lost a job, financial difficulties, crisis in the church. Whatever it is, I mean, and 20 million other variations thereof. Whatever it is, we praise Him in the storm. Remember that Gospel passage where there's Jesus in the boat with the apostles and the storm winds come, Jesus is at the head of the boat, and He is asleep.

And the storm comes, and the apostles are like, "Yo, dude, we're going to die." And He, who commands the heavens and the Earth, tells the sea to quiet and it does. And He looks at His faithful, these 12 men who know he is God, and say, "Why do you have such little faith in me? You were never in trouble; I was with you. Yeah, the wind's blowing, the seas are restless, but I got you, I got you. Trust me in that." And that's really where we speak to the Lord God through our grief and our broken heartedness. We have to trust Him and have faith that he is God.

We have to keep that eternal perspective. Saint Padre Pio said, "*Pray, hope and don't worry.*" That is how we go to the Lord in our broken heartedness, in our sadness, in our grief, in our

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difficulty, in our crisis. We pray and we hope because we believe that God is God and He's got our back. And we keep that eternal perspective. We read His word; we allow Him to guide us. And remember, the shortest sentence in the entirety of scripture is Jesus wept. He knows you; He sees you; He feels your grief and your broken heartedness. And He loves you too much to leave you there. So, trust Him in the process. Trust Him, have faith in Him, surrender that to Him so that he can guide you into the way of peace.