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Title: Calling the Broken

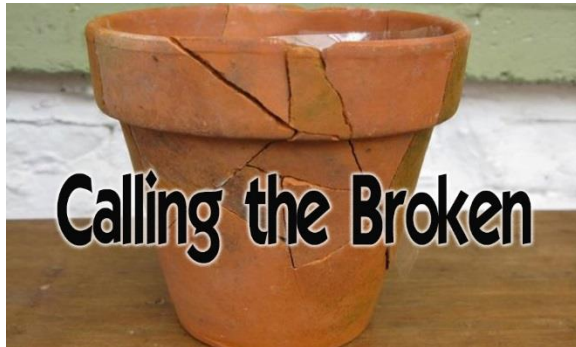
Date: June 3 & 4, 2018

Preaching: Dustin Hite, Promise Road Campus Pastor

Scripture: [2 Corinthians 4:5-7](#)

Text: [1 Samuel 3:1-10](#)

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Let's begin today with a little exercise. I want you to picture in your mind the most valuable thing you own in terms of dollars and cents. Many of you likely pictured your house, a car, maybe even some collectible you've been keeping in safe hiding as its value keeps going up and up and up. Now, let's change the terms of the exercise. I want you to

picture in your mind the item or items that mean the most to you, that thing you would run into a fire to save because it means that much to you. My guess is that for many of you those two pictures you had in your mind are not the same. While in terms of dollars and cents and outward appearances, our culture places a lot of value in items that, in the end, don't mean all that much to us. And yet, each of us, individually, places value on something that the rest of us would throw out on the trash heap if we came across it out of context. We've got to be able to see it through the eyes of the one who guarded and kept it and values it to truly understand.

I've got a few items like this. In my home, there is a shoebox in my closet that contains every card and note and letter that my wife has ever given me. To you, those letters don't mean a whole bunch; to me, they are infinitely valuable, irreplaceable, and reminders of the love story God has created through two people coming together 15 years ago. If you came into my office, you'd also see quite a few items from my kids--drawings and knick knacks and many other items that remind me of those three beautiful beings God has entrusted to me--but there's also a leather binder, tucked up in the corner of my desk. Inside that binder are letters I have written to my kids on the first day of every school year and on their birthdays, safe and secure in that binder until I give them to each at some point in the future.

So, what's the point? You might be asking yourself, "So, Dustin, what does all that mean?" Well, too often, we define the utility of the object in terms of its monetary value or its outward appearance or its functionality in terms

of making life easier. And yet, when push comes to shove, most of us would not describe our most valuable possessions in those terms. I think that's because embedded within each of us is an understanding that we've received from God and that is this: ***From the very beginning, God has valued the broken, the cracked, the imperfect in the world, and He has used them to change it.***

Let's take a look at a story in scripture that might help illustrate this idea: "3 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³ the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵ and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. ⁶ The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." ⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸ The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:1-10)

A few things to mention before we go further. First, we must give a little context to this passage. This is a crucial time in Israel's history, as the people have settled in the Promised Land, having come out of the times of judges and are struggling with how they live together amidst all the threats the surround them. As often happens, in the midst of this struggle and frustration, shady characters begin to take advantage. In this instance, it's members of the priesthood who begin to steal and take advantage of the people. It's the sons of Eli the priest who are the culprits and these sons have taken advantage of their position as priests. Eli's old and he's likely struggling about how best to handle wayward sons.

Another thing we should notice here is the way the text describes both Eli and Samuel. Eli has spent his life serving YHWH in the temple and yet he's now old, advanced in years, and his eyesight is growing dim. It's hard not to think that this might also be a description of Eli's own faith, as he is overwhelmed with his family situation. The description of Samuel is also quite telling. In the first few pages of this book, the prophecy about his

future is quite profound. But, right now, in chapter 3, he's just a young boy trying to learn what it will mean to serve in this capacity by working at the side of his mentor. In fact, the text describes him as having not yet known the Lord--we might understand that to mean that his faith was just blooming and growing.

We have two men who are on opposite ends of their life's spectrums, and yet the most amazing thing about this story is that both of them are needed to discern what's happening. God comes and speaks to Samuel, and he has to come four times because he confuses the voice of God with the voice of his mentor. His faith was still quite young. Even though it takes him three times to figure things out, it is Eli, in his wizened, old state, battered by his own complicity in the sins of his sons, to discern that it is God who is trying to speak to Samuel. You see, God chose to speak to someone who was just learning what faith meant and God chose a broken, old man who had forsaken his role as Israel's faithful leader, and because of that we read later that God's message to Samuel was that He had chosen to remove Eli from his role as priest and install Samuel, to lead that very young man to understand that it was God who was speaking to him. ***God values the broken, the cracked, the imperfect in the world, and He uses them to change it.***

That means God can use you and He can use me and He can use anyone to share and show the good news. We know this because Paul tells us this exact thing in one of his letters to the Corinthian church. Let's read it together: ⁵ For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (2 Corinthians 4:5-7)

Did you hear it? Between the lines, did you read it? Paul is saying exactly what we see played out in the story of Eli and Samuel: ***God values the broken, the cracked, the imperfect in the world, and He uses them to change it.***

What you might not know is that when the Corinthians heard the image of jars of clay, they likely would have pictured two things: (1) the every-day jars used to hold water and wine in houses of the Corinthians, which likely would have borne the marks of being chipped and cracked and repaired; (2) the every-day jars that would have held the wine and other elements used in worship at the temple. They would have been cared for at a level well

beyond their cost because of what they held. These two images collide together in Paul's analogy. We, as jars of clay, bear both the marks of our well-worn existences--the cracks and chips and brokenness of our sin--and we are valued because of the image of God we exhibit and the fact that God still uses us to accomplish His purposes.

And I think Paul understands this. Look back with me to his words: ⁵ For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:5-6)

When we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, God's light shows in our hearts and we come to understand the value we have in Him. But here's the thing: the only way that light gets out of the jars of clay that we are is through our cracks and chips and holes. So don't hide them. Let God use them and use you, because: ***God values YOU--the broken, the cracked, the imperfect YOU--and He wants to use YOU to change the world.*** And I know this, because scripture tells me so. It tells me the story of a God who looks upon his broken and fallen creation and loves it in spite of its flaws.

One of those items I might just run into a fire to save sits in my office. If you've ever been in my office, you likely have seen this item but it likely wouldn't have made an impression. It's a coffee cup with what clearly is a child's drawing on the front. Several years ago, when my oldest was in kindergarten, she came home so excited, waving an order form in my face saying she wanted me to buy something. Specifically, she wanted me to buy a coffee cup--even then, she knew her dad oh so well; that cup would get a lot of use--and on that cup was going to be the first artwork she did in school and she wanted me to have a copy. Over the years, I've used that cup every day for coffee...until I accidentally dropped it here after washing it. Even as the pieces lay shattered on the floor, I couldn't bring myself to throw it away. Instead, I got some super glue and spent a decent amount of time meticulously putting it back together. Even though it can't fulfill its intended purpose, it still has value to me. It, along with so many other things from my kids, are invaluable to me. When I look at that cup, I don't see the cracks, the chips or the fact that I can't use it for its original purpose. I see the pride of a young daughter and the love shared between her and her father. It still has value to me because of that. And the thing is, that's exactly how God sees you and me and every other person in this world. He doesn't see the chips, the cracks, the unfulfilled purposes; God sees a person He can use to shine His light to the rest of the world. But His light can only shine through your cracks.

If you're sitting here, new in your faith or rediscovering it again for the first time or wondering whether God can still use you because you've just done too much wrong in your life, remember: ***God values YOU--the broken, the cracked, the imperfect YOU--and He wants to use YOU to change the world.***