

Blessed and Broken

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Today's Treasure

Even in laughter, the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief.
Proverbs 14:13

A young mother recently lost her child to illness. She spent many long days and nights in the hospital room by her daughter's side before life gave way to death. Although life as she knew it had stopped in its course, the demands of everyday living continued on as they always will. After facing a scheduled surgery for one of her other children, she shared with me that it was strangely comforting to be there in the hospital room again, in that place ridden with pain. That place laced heavily with deep, sorrowful love clinging to hope. I understood this mix of agonizing pain and deep joy, a joy that only comes through intense pain. How does one describe this? Even as I sit here, my words fail me. A memory, an image of one evening, perhaps a year after our daughter passed, my husband and I sat on the couch together as we watched our three children play. Nothing out of the ordinary, but it was so remarkable. We admired them. We loved them. We cherished the goodness in that moment of happy playtime. It felt like a gift that had been taken away and was given back, returned from shattered, being put back together. We were so broken, so empty. The number of children had changed. There was one less. There always would be one less, a concept to be learned over and over again as we lived forward each day. There we were, brutally broken, yet feeling so very blessed. We were filled with love for our littles. Filled with thanksgiving for healing, even the mending of evening playtime. Filled with contentment for one moment in time, but filled with agony, loss, pain, broken hearts. This describes just one moment of many for the rest of my life. As it is hard to describe something indescribable out of everyday living, I return to that which is unchanging. The only solid ground I know, God's word, His Promises, His Love.

God addresses this unlikely pair of emotions in *Today's Treasure*:

Even in laughter, the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief.
Proverbs 14:13

What is this? Laughter and heartache, joy and grief? Why do these polar opposite words belong in one verse together? How is it possible? The contradiction of pain and joy, blessing and broken. Humanly speaking they have no place being together yet

throughout the scriptures we find a constant union of the two. Just as the image of an evening on the couch, marking one moment in time comes to mind, so does another moment in time, a moment that changed the world, a moment that secured eternity. Jesus, although perfect in every way, was accused, beaten, mocked and hung on a cross to die a slow and painful death, one that could be heard from afar. His mother watched helplessly. There was no earthly joy to be seen or felt in this moment. Yet it was through this very moment in time that God chose to show His great love, His deep sorrow over our sin, His mercy and *grace* so richly poured out, and His joy made perfect. It was on a splintered, broken cross, stained with the blood of a perfect man.

This is how God chose to give us *joy*! He wants us to pick up a cross, to surrender ourselves completely, and to follow Him every day. It is at the cross that He calls us to return. He has chosen this place of pain to become our joy. It is indescribable, what He did for us. God willingly chose the death of His only Son, to save me, an imperfect mess. There is such beauty, a broken beauty, a *sorrow* that ends in laughter, a *joy* that ends in pain.

When I reflect on my salvation in Christ, I realize that my eternal reward (oh the joy that heaven is and will be!) was purchased by the death of a son, God's Son. He knows what it is like to lose a child, and even so, He thought I was worth it! I feel joy and pain at the foot of the cross. And just as the wounds on the hands and feet of Jesus were recognized after He rose from the dead, our wounds and scars from this life do not go unnoticed. They will remain, cracked, but mended. They will be fully glorified and restored in heaven. O, what a day that will be!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for being the beauty in my brokenness. Thank you for the cross, the perfect example of complete surrender giving way to joy. Surrender that hurts, but *joy* that fills a broken spirit. The words fall from my lips, yet I fail to grasp the enormity of it all. Help me to trust in You. Help me to lay my broken self down and be blessed.