

# Things that broke Jesus' heart (1)

## SIN

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Luke 19:41-44

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**[Please note these are unedited preaching notes and are not for publication. They are made available here to aid the deaf community in Christ Church and to be a reference for anyone who found the sermons useful.]**

Over the last while we have been going through chapters 7, 8 and 9 in the Gospel of Luke looking at Jesus encounter with various people. Building on that platform I want over the next few Sundays to look at some of passages in the Gospels where we get a glimpse into the things that caused Jesus to weep, things that broke his heart. They don't all say that he wept.

In Luke's Gospel we read how Jesus sends a few of his disciples on in front of him to get a donkey for him to ride on. They do that they find a donkey and bring it to Jesus. They put their cloaks on it and Jesus rides into Jerusalem in prophetic fulfilment of the fact that the Messiah will ride into Jerusalem as it king not riding on a what charger at the head of a great army but in humility in servant in sacrifice on the humble beast of burden. As Jesus enters Jerusalem people come to meet him and throw their cloaks on the ground before him and they begin to shout out in response to all the incredible miracles hat Jesus has preformed of brining people's lives back together again, their minds, their bodies, their souls, their spirits, They shout out their praises and in gratitude they call out, Hosanna, blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!

And then Luke tells us this –

**READ: Luke 19:41-44**

Jesus weeps for the city. His heart breaks for them.

His heart is broken over the fact that the opportunity for salvation, the place of grace the time of mercy and forgiveness, is hidden from their eyes. Not only is that hidden from them but also the true peril that they are in.

He prophesied an event that is only 4 decades away when the Roman army will encircle Jerusalem. The walls will be breached, and city destroyed and not one stone will not be left on another, and the people even the children will be destroyed.

Jesus wept over sin. He wept over the consequence of that sin. He wept over the peril and danger the people were in. And he wept over the missed opportunity for forgiveness and mercy.

What Jesus is expressing here is the heart of the God towards us as articulated by the prophet Ezekiel where the prophet giving us insight into the heart of God says ...

Ezekiel 18

*23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?*

Ezekiel 33

*11 Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'*

*I delight in people turning that they might live.*

The heart of God towards the true condition of human life is one of broken heartedness, with a true understanding of the peril of our choices and an accurate understanding of the consequences of where they choices lead.

One of the places where this is most obvious in Jesus teaching and is most difficult to comprehend and incorporate into our lives is in Matthew 18.

This passage comes in the context of Jesus giving that sober warning about not causing a child to stumble, and that it would be better for us to have a millstone around our neck and be thrown into the sea, rather than to cause a little one to sin. On the heels of that kind of sober warning Jesus says this ...

Matthew 18:7ff

*7 "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!*

*8 If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.*

*9 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.*

This is not Jesus meek and mild. This is not Jesus kind and comforting. This is Jesus confrontational and direct.

What he is telling us about the peril of our action is shocking. What he is saying is shocking. He chooses this illustration of self mutilation to illustrate the true nature of what he is talking about.

Jesus is broken hearted about sins and its perils. And the thing that I want to draw our attention to is that Jesus says that this sin and its perils are hidden from our eyes.

The simple fact is this. When it comes to sin there are things we are unable to see and comprehend and understand. When it comes to sin, some things are hidden from our eyes. There are things we can not or are unable to see.

At a cognitive level this should not surprise us. We know from reading Genesis that the devil is involved in instigating sin, and he is described as the Deceiver. He is a liar. Jesus says that when he lies he speaks his native language.

I have said this before but let me repeat it. There is good news and bad news.

The good news is that all the devil can do is lie. As we are in Christ he has no power over us. All he can do is lie. That is the good news.

The bad news is that he is a very good liar. He is a very skilled at deceiving us. He is a past master as deception.

The thing about deception is that it deceives. Its effectiveness is in that we do not recognise it as a lie.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says that Satan disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). The Greek word is very close to our English word masquerade. Imagine a masked ball - people walking around with masks on

pretending to who they are not. Satan puts on a mask. He is the deceiver. He blinds us to sin and its effects.

I want to high light three of the tactics he uses to myths that the enemy uses to blind us to sin and its consequences in our lives.

**(1) If somebody does it, or if everybody does it, it must be okay.**

Jesus says: Sin will come, but woe to the person through whom they come!

The reality of sin is all around us. We live in such a difficult world in terms of exposure and temptation and opportunity. It is hard to say which time in history it was hardest to live a moral and committed life as a follower of Jesus, but certainly today is challenging.

The bible uses many different words for sin.

One word suggest the idea of **missing the target**. I shoot an arrow and I don't hit the bull's eye in fact I don't hit the target at all, I hit the guy picking up the arrows. Sin is described as being way off target.

It is also described as **falling off the path or straying of the path**. It is not so much a deliberate wilful act, but by indifference or not being alert I simply wonder off the path. I stray from the path, but consequences of wondering off the path especially when you are on a cliff top are dire. You are likely to fall off the cliff.

Another word is used infers that **we are in debt**. Sin is not just about what we have done. There are things we should have done and failed to do. It is expressed in the confessional prayer ... "we confess that we have sinned in what we have left undone".

Then there is the idea that I am **reaching for something and I don't take hold of it**. I have lost the desire to reach as high as I am meant to reach in my life. So I am content to live with apathy and ignorance and settle for living in a much lower way.

Now however we look at sin, and in with what ever we are grappling with whether it is deceit or greed or lust or envy or fear or anger or unforgiveness or 1000 other things .... the tactic the enemy uses is to blind us to sin and its perils is to trick us into believing that just because other people are doing it, it must be okay or at least not too bad – not life threatening.

Like complaining children we say “I have friends who do this, why is not okay for me to do this?”

So the enemy gets us to believe that because everyone else is doing it is okay. The second thing that causes the truth of what sin really is to be hidden from our eyes and to be sheltered from the consequences of what will happen is the idea that

**(2) I can't live without doing it.**

I can't live without doing it. It is just who I am. I can't control this thing. This is who I am this is the way God made me.

If you have every been in ministry to or grappled yourself with or had an interest in those struggling with addictions, the mindset often comes to place where the person says, this is me – I have to accept this. I not have control over this. This is just who I am.

But what happens is that people caught in addiction usually have to go right to the bottom and crash out. And addictions, when they run their course bring financial ruin, relational ruin, physical ruin, emotional ruin, ... but in that place some time people say, but this is not really me. This is not me. I want to live without this. I don't want this to define me and control me.

There is a dangerous tendency for us to choose to identify ourselves by our desires. Because I desire this or that, that is who I am.

In the UK the local equivalent of our Spar Pick-n-Pay is Tesco. Bishop Graham Cray spoke at a New Wine a while back and said that we have changed René Descartes famous philosophical statement, “*cognito ergo sum*” = “I think therefore I am”, to “*Tesco ergo sum*” = “I shop therefore I am”  
I desire therefore I am. I am the sum of my desires.

If that is true we will end up in a very broken place.  
We are something far more than what we desire.

So that is a second tactic the enemy uses to try and blind us to reality and danger of sin; getting us to believe that we can't do anything about it. We hide our sin under the defence of, “this is just who I am”. I am just the sum of my desires and I have to learn to accept it and live with it.

The third tactic the enemy uses to blind us to sin and its perils is this.



**(3) It is really not that serious anyway. I am not hurting anybody else.**

This is the modern day culture ethic. I am not hurting anyone else am I? That problem is that if you are spending time and money and energy and passion on something that doesn't hurt anybody, you have not spent time and energy and passion on something that helps some one.

We know that straying from the path, missing the target, and all those images that are used to describe sin are not just about things we have done, but things we have not done.

That psychological game we play to defend actions and choices in our lives that what I am doing won't hurt anyone so it is okay, just won't wash. It won't wash in the light of the peril the real genuine peril of continuing to harbour and nurture and allow to grow things that really want to destroy our lives.

**Jesus' heart is broken.** As Jesus rides into the Jerusalem on that donkey his heart is breaking. He weeps over the city and the perilous state they are in because they do not recognise their sin – it is hidden from them.

Sin is not something that because it is all around us and everyone else is doing it, or because I can find people who follow the path with me that it is okay. I am not alone. I am not hurting anybody so it is okay.

All of these myths have to go. We have to recognise them as myths and they have to be exploded. They will be exploded eventually by our experience. It is far preferable that we see through them before experience will confirm the accuracy of Jesus words.

**But the other thing that Jesus weeps over** as he rides into Jerusalem alongside his anguish that people don't recognise their sin is that they did not know that that day would bring them peace. They did not know that in him and in his death and resurrection that would follow within the next few days, that there was an offer of peace.

Having a broken heart over sin does not leave us in a sad depressed place. Having a broken heart over sin does not mean we fall into self hatred and condemnation.

Far from it!

The Good News is that Jesus has overcome sin on cross.  
 The Good News is that Jesus has defeated the enemy.  
 The Good News is that Jesus has trampled Satan under his feet.  
 The Good News is that Jesus has paid the price and cancelled our debt.  
 The Good News is that in Christ we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

That means that we have to change how we view ourselves and how we view where we going. Because the more we tolerate sin and allow it to remain the more we push away the opportunity for God to move into our lives and embrace us with his mercy and grace and power, to transform us.

Do you want to know more of God's grace and transforming power in your life?  
 Do you want that knowledge that Jesus has defeated sin on the cross to move from being a theoretical head knowledge thing to a reality in your life?  
 I do.

Well if you do then there are some things we need to do.

**The first we have to change is our perspective of our own sin.**

It has to change from something we would defend and protect to something we will oppose.  
 It has to become our enemy and stop being our friend.

So much of sin of course is a false way to meet genuine need. Right?  
 We have genuine needs and sin is offered as a false way of trying to address some of those needs. We become addicted to those false ways. But we have to start recognising them for what they are. We need to recognise them for being empty and false and for not really delivering on what they promise.

The prophet Zechariah gives us a very clear definition of an idol. An idol is something we look to meet a genuine need, but it does not deliver on its promises.

Zechariah 10:2

[The idols speak deceit, diviners see visions that lie; they tell dreams that are false, they give comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd.](#)

They give comfort in vain. Believing and acting on the belief that these idols what ever they are will bring us the comfort we need, is in essence sin. They will not deliver on the promise.

We need to recognise that they are not our friend. They offer false comfort. Sin is our enemy.

So the firstly our perspective on our sin needs to change.

### **The second thing we need to do is to change our engagement with sin.**

Too often, for us as well meaning devoted Christian, we recognise sin patterns in our lives; we recognise the root system and the pattern that is going on, and we know how strong they are, and we have wrestled with them and had this tug of war with them, and maybe we have a season when we have experienced some victory, but then and it comes back.

And even as well meaning followers of Christ we get to the point where we say, oh well I can't beat this one. It has got me. I am just going to have to learn to live with it.

Friends we have to re-engage. We have to shift out of neutral back into drive, in terms of our struggle to grow up and become mature, with developing character with living out godliness. We have to re-engage.

We have to say,

"I am going to go on that journey. I am going to climb that mountain with God's help. With his grace I am going to overcome the things that I have not over come yet".

That re-engagement will mean everything.

When we were living in Nottingham when I was doing my theological studies we lived in a large house just up the road from the college called The Grange. It was a grand old home that was divided into 8 student flats. While the flats were quite small the garden was huge. I discovered that at the bottom of the garden there was what used to be a vegetable garden. It was partly walled off. You have read the Secret Garden – Mary Lennox??? Like that.

This garden was completely over grown with brambles. It took me many hours of hard work and many scratches and cuts to clear the garden. And I was then able to plant some potatoes and brussel sprouts. I had great satisfaction in harvesting the crop of potatoes and serving home grown brussels.

A number of years after we left Nottingham I went to visit and I went to see how The Grange was and to look around the garden. The vegetable garden was back the way it was when I arrived – worse in fact. Completely overgrown.

If you don't keep at it the weeds and brambles come back. Once they have got in even with the most thorough digging and clearing out and using the most powerful poisons if you don't keep up the weeding regime you will slip back to where you were.

The battle against sin continues – it is never done and dusted.

We have to keep on fighting. We can land up in a place, either through defeat or ignorance we end in place of saying well I am just so glad that Jesus is merciful. He is. Friends he really is.

But this Jesus, who is so merciful and compassionate, also weeps over the brokenness in our lives, over the brokenness of sin and its consequences, even if it is not of eternal consequence he weeps over the present consequence of sin in our lives.

My prayer is that God would stir in our hearts a sense that I want to live a life that reaches high. I want to live a life that hits the target. I want to live a life that is on that narrow path. It is not following some broad way into defeat and destruction, but is following a narrow path into real life. Into real dignity. Into real wholeness.

May God stoke those fires of real engagement in our lives, where we don't simply allow and accept what has come to be in our life over the course of time.

**Thirdly we need to change our attitude to sin and see discovering sin that was previously hidden from us as an opportunity for God.**

Last weekend one of the guys on the men's weekend said to me, the trouble with this weekend is that I have discovered a whole lot of sins I was not aware of to add to the ones I am only too aware of.

But when a hidden sin is revealed we need not be despondent and down hearted. Just the opposite! When we discover a sin we have opportunity to deal with it.

St Augustine coined the phrase, Felix Culpa = happy sin! Why? Because it drives us straight into the merciful arms of Jesus who has overcome the evil one, who has conquered sin and death and who longs that we may live.

Happy sin!

Another opportunity for God to break in and release us from something that is harming us and keeping us in bondage.

Another opportunity for God to fill the gap in our lives that something else has crept in to fill with an offer of false comfort.

As Jesus rides the donkey into Jerusalem what breaks his heart and causes him to weep, is that the people of Jerusalem did not see the gift of peace he was offering. The eyes of their hearts were blind to the gift. They did not see in what a perilous place they were in and what destruction awaited them.

Friends, Jesus heart breaks over our sin. His longing for us is life; life in all its fullness.

The illustration he uses of plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand is radical. In effect he is saying rather be mutilated in this way than allow the effects of sin to mutilate you and do far worse, destroy you.

Sin needs be dealt with decisively and radically.

That means recognising it as our enemy.

It means re-engaging with it. The battle goes on.

But wonderfully and gloriously it means seeing it as an opportunity for God to set us free and bring us to a new place of peace with God with ourselves and one another.

Lets pray.