

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

JOHN 19:30

BROKEN

“And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”

What does it mean “to break” something? A child can “break” a toy, accidentally or on purpose, damaging it beyond repair. A rancher can “break” a horse, teaching it to accept and obey a rider on its back. An attorney can “break” a witness in court, forcing him to abandon his cover-up and speak the truth. A police detective can “break” a suspect, making him admit his crime.

In this evening's text we see Jesus “broken.” From the beginning of His earthly life, there was a struggle between Satan and Jesus. Satan realized Jesus was the Promised Savior. Satan wanted Jesus to fail. Satan wanted to “break” Jesus. As a young child Jesus was sought by King Herod and his soldiers to be put to death, lest He become, as Herod feared, an earthly competitor to his throne. God protected the young child and family in Egypt. When Jesus was about to begin His ministry, Satan tempted Him directly, three times, to abandon the Father's plan and to heed Satan's lies. Each time Jesus stood firm using God's Word from the Old Testament. During His preaching and teaching, the religious leaders of the day tried repeatedly to trap Jesus in His Words to discredit Him. Jesus always had the better answer. Ultimately Satan reached the point where he was determined to break Jesus, by having the Jewish leadership put Him to death. That would silence Him for good!

We have seen this very struggle unfold in the Passion History readings. Satan saw to it that Jesus was bound, that He was verbally maligned, that He was assaulted physically and emotionally, that He was traded away for Barabbas, a robber and murderer, that He was mockingly divested of clothing and of justice, nailed to a cross. Tonight we see Jesus “broken.” *Bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.* Jesus died. Imagine the cheers in hell. Imagine the swelled up pride of Satan. I've done it. I've won!

How did it happen? Jesus had never been a “fighter” with fists and swords, but yet He had always been a fighter. He was never out-manuevered, or intimidated, or manipulated, into a mis-step or into a corner. Two times or more, the Jewish leaders sought to kill Him on the spot, but He walked through the midst of them (Luke 4:30, John 8:59) unharmed. Without physical blows, He “fought” them and foiled them every time. However, on Good Friday, Satan's “soldiers” had repeated success against Jesus. If this were a movie, how many fans of Jesus, who had seen His acts of sheer power against storms, against demons, against the grave, wouldn't have been shouting, “Come on, Jesus! Fight, Jesus, Fight! Do something, with might or words! Do something.” He didn't. Why? Had He lost the survival instinct which God builds into every man, woman, child, and creatures of the animal kingdom? Was Jesus “looking to lose,” “giving up” like a soldier seeing the futility of his unit's situation, rushing into the fire of the enemy without even raising his weapon? like a young basketball player who was intent on winning the championship, but was defeated in the very last seconds, who said, “All my dreams are shattered.” Broken. Is that what was happening here to Jesus? *And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.*

We've seen Jesus breaking before. In the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what was to come, His sweat fell as it were great drops of blood. What makes someone sweat like that? Oppressive heat and humidity? Yes. Great sickness, as when a person is down with the stomach flu and feels like his insides are going to come up out of the mouth? When in great pain? When very stressed? When nervous? Yes, to all of them. Jesus was breaking in the Garden, but the Father sent angels to strengthen Him. Likewise when He was pronounced guilty at Pilate's palace, and was ordered to carry His own cross to Golgotha, He broke down under the load—His body had already been beaten and scourged. But God saw to it that help was provided for Him. Simon of Cyrene was picked out of the crowd to carry the cross behind Him. Yet here on the cross at Calvary, no help came. Even the Father Himself forsook, abandoned, deserted Him. It seems that as Jesus' time on the cross was ending, He was completely broken down and giving up. Helplessly slipping away into death.

Not at all! Jesus was “broken” here only because He was willing to be so. In strength Jesus gave Himself into this humiliating torture, suffering, and death. He LET it happen. He didn't fight back on purpose. His fight for “life” was not the real fight going on here. He was fighting for His sheep, the Father's children, His brothers and sisters, including you and me. He was as if running a miles-long gauntlet, where people stand in two lines holding sticks and cudgels to smack the one running between the lines striving to reach the end. Jesus was running that

impossible gauntlet for you, carrying the burden of sin. The guilt of sin is an impossible load. “Who can redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him?” (Psalm 49:7). No one could carry the load, but Jesus did. He would run the gauntlet to the end, He would suffer all, to rescue sinners from their own mistakes and Satan’s clutches. He was not broken. He laid down His life.

Do you remember Jesus’ words from John 10? *I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father (John 10:17-18).* Nobody was taking His life from Him. It was not being inched out of Him fraction by fraction, as death by crucifixion ran its course. He gave it up of His own accord. This is what the Father wanted Him to do for us, for you, for me. The Father loved Him dearly. The Father loves you. In this passage from John 10, Jesus says He has the “power” to lay it down and to take it up. That word “power” is more than just the “ability.” Genuine “power” also includes genuine authority. If someone comes to the church property with a torch and a court order to burn down the garage because it is disease infested, it means that person has the power (the torch) and the authority (the court order) to do so. Jesus in His power and authority, let them put Him to death. They did not take it from Him. In fact, three of the four Gospel writers, clearly say, before Jesus died, He cried out in a loud voice. He did not die from asphyxiation or suffocation, which took place in crucifixion. He had strength to cry out with a loud voice. When the soldiers came to break the legs of the criminals so they suffocated faster without leg support to lift the weight from their heaving chests, they found Jesus already dead. He had given Himself into death. When Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate to request the body of Jesus, Pilate was surprised to learn that Jesus was dead already? (Perhaps Pilate wondered if this strange man, claiming to be sent by God, would somehow avoid crucifixion??) Jesus had laid down His life. *Bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. He gave up His spirit.*

“His spirit.” The word for “spirit” is “pneuma” in Greek. It is a word meaning a person’s soul, or spirit, or life. Jesus handed over His soul, His life, His “neuma,” when He died. The same word is also used to name another invisible reality-- wind, air. We talk about “pneumatic” tools, which run on air. We talk about a sickness called pneumonia—a serious sickness afflicting one’s “air” exchange.. Jesus also gave up His breath, His pneuma, breathed His last, expired, when He died. He bowed His head in willing death. He was physically “done,” “broken.” Silence. No more sounds of His voice, no more movement of His limbs. Silence. Like miners trapped underground who are in radio contact with the surface while rescue operations are underway. One day the transmitter goes silent. Their end has come. They succumbed. They were broken by death.

But Jesus was really not “broken,” was He? He fulfilled His Father’s will. He died in love for you. At death, His soul went to be with His Father in heaven and would return to his body on Sunday morning. He would descend into hell ALIVE as the victor. He would exit the tomb ALIVE —with or without the stone rolled away-- your Savior.

And you? In your life, likewise let your Father control and direct all things. Do not seek to fight evil on your own as you see fit. Do not seek revenge against Satan and Satan’s forces, your enemies, as your emotion dictates. Let the Lord lead the way. *Vengeance is Mine, says the Lord, I will repay (Romans 12:19).* Jesus was “broken,” if you will, and rose again, so that you might not be “broken” under your sins. He was “broken” only to rise again, so that Satan would be “broken” forever! “Broken” Jesus is your comfort and peace!

So be it! Amen.

Pastor Kanzenbach---