

Blessed Broken Given: Given

There's one more word in the series: given. But what if you feel like you have nothing to give? Maybe you think *purpose* is connected to *value*.

Luke 24:30-32 - This is the third "Blessed Broken Given" story in Luke's gospel. This is a moment of mission.

What does it mean to be 'given'?

1. To be given is to be spent out of love for Jesus.

Why do we allow our lives to be given for another? The obvious answer is love. But what do we love to become given? The answer again seems obvious: the person you are serving, the one to whom you are given. These are the obvious answers, but they are incomplete and insufficient.

Ask Peter - John 21:15-18

After the Resurrection, Peter returned to fishing. Why?

Maybe Peter felt he had lost it all that night when he denied knowing Jesus. Maybe Peter was too confused about what the Resurrection really meant. Maybe, whatever it meant; Peter was too covered in shame for it to matter. He might as well try to just live a quiet life, a smaller story.

Jesus found Peter and reenacted the scene of their first encounter, the first time Jesus called Peter to follow Him.

Jesus was reinstating Peter. He was reaffirming Peter's purpose, calling, and destiny. The three repetitions of the question are meant to correspond to Peter's threefold denial. The most significant bit, however, is the one hidden in plain sight. The question was simply, "Do you love me?"

In the other gospel accounts of Peter's first call, Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me and I will make you a fisher of men." You might say that first call was about a purpose.

That is, after all, what it means to be given, but it isn't the love of being given that leads to our givenness. It isn't the love of a purpose that can sustain us. In the end that was not enough to keep Peter faithful. The love of a calling will never keep you from falling.

If Peter's first call was about a purpose, this second call—this renewal of destiny and identity—was about a person.

Do you love Jesus? Do you love Jesus above all else? Lesser loves may lead you to begin following Jesus or even to enter into vocational ministry. But these cannot sustain you. The love of meaning or mission or purpose or the church will not keep you surrendering and serving. Only a deep and abiding love for Jesus can do that. Only surrendering to Him can do that.

2. To be given is to live for the life of the world.

On the way to Emmaus, two disciples hung their heads and hid their tears. Jesus Himself “arrived and joined them on their journey”.

When we are too weak, too broken to come to Jesus, He comes to us. He Himself joins us on the journey.

We need to listen and learn and then enter the places of pain in our communities. Like Jesus coming alongside the disillusioned disciples, we need to walk gently into the spaces where the de-churched and post-Christians have gone.

Jesus then began to explain to them from the law and the prophets how it had been prophesied that the Messiah would have to suffer and then be raised up. They had been reading the Scriptures wrong. Before they could recover from that paradigm shift, Jesus went on to another: He showed them how the Scriptures spoke of *Him*.

We have to find a way to tell the world it's own story, to re-tell the story of Scripture in a more beautiful and Christ-centered way, the way Jesus did.

Then, when they reached Emmaus, these two asked Jesus to stay with them. It was hospitality to a stranger that became the game changer.

Jesus accepted their offer. Then Jesus the guest started acting like the host. When they sat at the table, Jesus took the bread and began giving thanks. This may mean nothing to us since we do not really have meal protocols, but in Jewish culture, the host always says the blessing. The guest never does. Yet here was this strange stranger talking as if the Scriptures were all about Him and acting as if the table and the meal were His to bless.

Luke 24:30 tells us that Jesus “took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.” This is the same set and sequence as the Passover and feeding the five thousand. Then their “eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”

In an age when belief is contested, when religion is a private matter with little bearing on real life, the church needs to recover the art of radical hospitality.

But this is a kind of hospitality that is more than making our sacred spaces ready for others; it is a kind of hospitality that we exhibit by showing up in someone else's space with a posture of openness. Like Jesus acting as host of a meal that was not His, we can find a way to reach out to those in the world and stand in the middle of their questions and pain, their disappointments and fear. We can take bread, bless it, break it, and give it to them.

We ourselves can become the bread that is blessed, broken, and given for them, for their lives—yes, even for the life of the world.

3. To be given is to continue the circle of grace.

There is a kind of cycle to givenness. Giving begets more giving.

The self-giving of God generates our own self-giving to others. It seems to be this way by God's design.

Reciprocity is not giving to get. It is a way to reinforce a relationship. In the Old Testament, love for one's neighbor was a way to demonstrate one's love for God, including the care of the poor- Proverbs 19:17. This was why Jesus could say, generations later, that "as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me" (Matthew 25:45).

At the heart of the gospel is grace, a gift that provokes giving.

God is gracious. He gives good gifts, even to those who do not deserve it. And those who receive God's good gifts are to return them *upward* in praise and *outward* in service.

Grace follows the pattern of reciprocity common to gift giving in the ancient world, but with two key differences. First, God's grace is given to the *unworthy*. No one is fit to receive what God has lavished on us. Second, God's grace is meant to generate reciprocity in a wider circle, benefiting even those who are outside. Grace begets grace. Giving begets giving. Or as Jesus said in Matthew 10:8, "Freely you received, freely give."

The givenness of Jesus, the bread of life, makes our givenness as the church, the body of Christ, possible.