

Putting Humpty Together Again

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Humpty Dumpty's not a happy story. It doesn't matter if we sing it to a pretty tune for children and call it a nursery rhyme. This story is nothing short of tragic. Humpty's life is broken forever. That's what happens when an egg falls off a wall. It's permanently broken, and seemingly, no one can put him together again.

I'm wondering if your life feels like this right now. Does Covid-19, or racial tensions in our country, or unrest in American cities, or the current presidential election, or perhaps some other personal challenges make your life seem broken? Does it seem like your life may never be put together and whole again?

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus addresses one broken aspect of human life, and that is our relationships. What are we to do when we are separated and estranged from significant people in our lives? Maybe they have hurt you, or you have hurt them, or there is some combination of hurt where both can be to blame?

In other words, Jesus addresses if your brother or sister or friend, or some other important person in your life, has hurt you. Is there hope for this broken relationship to be put together again? Or is this relationship like Humpty Dumpty, never to be together and whole again? I think there are four important points here.

First point, Jesus says do not ignore the problem, but instead go to this person and tell them how you are hurt. Go to them with the hope he or she will have a helpful conversation with you,

where you both are able to admit where you were hurt and wrong, and where you are both able to offer grace and forgiveness.

Still, Jesus says, if that doesn't work, don't give up. If you are not able to resolve your hurt through that conversation, then he tells us to have other conversations with them, this time with other persons who you both trust, and see if you both are able to admit where you were wrong, and yes, offer grace and forgiveness.

However, Jesus says, if you are not able to resolve the hurt, if the relationship is still broken and unable to be put together again after several attempts like this, then Jesus says, **and this is our second point, we are to treat that person as a Gentile or a tax collector.** Now, this is where we have to be extra careful.

You see, it's not what we might think. This does not permit us to ignore that person, avoid them, or in any way hurt them or discriminate against them. This was sometimes done in the time of Jesus. Certain people considered Gentiles, tax collectors, and other sinners, as people who were to be avoided.

Yet Jesus treated such people differently. Jesus went out of his way to engage Gentiles, to embrace them, and to bring God's word to them. Jesus sat around and ate and had conversations with tax collectors and other sinners, seeking to embrace them, and to bring God's word of forgiveness and love to them.

So, when Jesus says treat people in your life who have hurt you like a Gentile or tax collector, he does not mean we are to hold a grudge against them. Instead, as I understand it, we are to pray for them, and hope in Christ such broken people and relationships can be put together again with the help of the Lord.

Third point, if we just cannot for whatever reason resolve such a broken relationship, then we leave the trouble with God. In

fact, near the end of this reading, Jesus addresses this very point. He says whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

This means Jesus sees we are simply unable to reconcile with every person here on earth. Even though the Lord was all about forgiveness, I mean, he came to earth, died on the cross, and was raised from the dead to forgive sinners, still, he sees that not every human relationship is restored this side of heaven.

Jesus sees apologizing – saying, “I’m sorry”, and forgiveness – saying, “I forgive you”, is not always possible for us here on earth, so he tells us to leave harder broken relationships to God. He tells us to give these broken relationships, and all the hurt and pain they have caused us, to God. Let God worry about them.

So, in other words, don’t let what you can’t resolve here on earth, derail the rest of your life. Still, we should never lose hope. Broken human relationships are not as hopeless as Humpty, who could not be put back together again. What cannot be put together by us, may one day be reconciled with the help of God.

Our fourth point, Jesus says, as you are going through all such life challenges, broken relationships and otherwise, he will be right there with us. He says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among you,” and allow me to add, helping you, holding you, and giving you hope every day.

So, we have more than all the king’s horses and all the king’s men in our corner. We have the Lord Jesus Christ himself in our midst, helping us through all this hard work in life. Jesus is in the midst of us as we seek to work out our broken relationships, and as we struggle with the many and great challenges of life in 2020.

This is perhaps the greatest promise of all. There is no trouble or struggle or problem that we have, which will scare the Lord Jesus away from us. In other words, if you are really struggling in life with an important relationship that is very broken and seemingly cannot be put together again, Jesus is struggling with you.

The truth is, what we cannot make right, what people cannot not put together again, the Lord Jesus will ultimately resolve one day. While I cannot tell you when or how, this is your time to simply like a child, trust that Jesus has it under his control, and the Lord will repair and renew all that is broken in this world and our lives.

People of God, we have really struggled to be a community of faith this year. The coronavirus has separated us physically, because of our need to isolate to stay healthy and be safe. So, you may wonder about this precious promise of Jesus being present where two or three are gathered together in his name.

Well, we have worshiped every week despite the coronavirus. We have broadcast services, mailed out letters, made phone calls, offered parking lot communions and worship, and said many prayers. All these acts have brought us together with Jesus, so Jesus has been with us through all these challenging days.

In fact, I believe Jesus is with you right now. You may be watching this sermon on Facebook or reading a paper or online copy of it. Whatever the case, you and I are connecting right now, the two of us, and I proclaim to you our Savior Jesus is with us too in this very moment, putting your life and my life together again.

Amen.