

May I speak in the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

This is the first sermon I've ever preached, which has been inspired by a Japanese expert in tidying up. But my understanding of our epistle that was set for this evening was transformed by my recent reading of the new book by Marie Kondo called Letter From Japan. When I read that book, she introduced me to the Japanese concept of kintsugi, which is the art of repairing broken pottery by mending the cracks with lacquer mixed with gold, silver, or platinum. And I was drawn to the idea that flaws and imperfections in an object add rather than detract from its beauty. And I was thinking of this when I noticed that the reference to something being broken in our epistle. We read there Paul's account of the Last Supper, and he writes about how Jesus took bread, broke it, and when he had given thanks, said, "This is my body which is broken for you."

And when we reenact this Last Supper in our communion service, one of the most powerful moments for me when I'm celebrating that is what's called the fraction. It's the moment when the celebrant takes the host after the prayer of consecration and lifts it up and then breaks it in two. And then the rubric says, "There follows a period of silence." And I always am touched and moved in that moment that I'm doing something to represent Jesus' body being broken for us.

It's a powerful moment. We remember the cost of Jesus' crucifixion. So my preparation for this evening focused on the word broken. And I soon discovered that there's a rabbit hole you can go down out there on this subject. There's a big controversy about whether the word broken should be included in the biblical text. Apparently, some of the earliest biblical manuscripts don't say that Jesus' body was broken. It was just the bread. And the point is argued passionately because the stakes are high. It's very important for those who argue that we shouldn't use the word broken in this context when referring to Jesus' body, because they see that as contradicting what the Bible says elsewhere about Jesus' bones being broken. It says in the book of Exodus that none of the Passover lamb's bones were to be broken. And in John's gospel, we read that unlike the two bandits who were crucified either side of Jesus, Jesus' bones weren't broken because he'd already died on the cross.

And this line of argument seems unhelpfully literalistic to me because while none of Jesus' bones may have been broken during the crucifixion, clearly his body was

broken. We talk just in normal conversation. We might say of someone that after a certain catastrophe, well, of course, they were a broken man or woman.

How much more would crucifixion render someone a broken man? What's at stake here is the need that many people feel for consistency, perfection, and literal truth. We don't like living with incompleteness, contradiction, brokenness. We try so hard to hold everything together. What Marie Kondo and the concept of kintsugi has taught me is the positive potential of brokenness. In Japan, broken things can be restored and be even more beautiful after they've been restored than before they were broken. Beauty does not have to be linked to perfection and the absence of flaws. What we celebrate this Holy Week is how the broken body of Jesus was gloriously restored. Kintsugi treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object. Its brokenness becomes part of the story. And so it is with God. We don't talk about God in abstract terms as Christians. We don't worship his eternal qualities.

We worship a God who entered into human history. And when we gather for worship, we tell his story. That's what we'll be doing in this communion service, we tell the story.

We tell the story of our God, who in the person of Jesus took on human form and as the writer to the Hebrews daringly said was made perfect in suffering. That's dangerous language which has troubled scholars throughout the years. What does it mean to be made perfect? What does that say about the time before Jesus suffered? Was there a time he wasn't perfect? That's a less challenging question if we understand the principle of kintsugi. That allows us to take Jesus's brokenness seriously as part of his story of restoration, as part of his journey towards glory. The savior we worship was broken and that brokenness enabled him to become the Lord we worship today. So on this Maundy Thursday, may we be given the grace to let go of the need to keep everything perfect and flawless. Let us see that brokenness is not the final word, and that living into our failings allows for brokenness to be restored, to come back more beautiful. And maybe there's a hope there too for our broken world.

Amen.