



## HOPE FOR THE WOUNDED

Hebrews 2:9-18

Pastor Al Detter

5:30pm, 9:30 & 11:00am Grace Church April 15-16, 2006

None of us is going to escape wounds, pain, and suffering. We're all going to feel at some point in life like shattered pieces of glass that can never be beautifully reassembled. Well, my job today is to give you hope if you feel broken and wounded. My prayer is that every one of you will be encouraged by the time you leave this place.

When I was in seminary, my preaching professors used to say, "If you scratch long enough and deep enough, you'll find that everyone you meet is struggling with something." And then they would quote a famous preacher of years gone by whose name I can't remember: "If you preach to people's pain, you'll never lack for an audience." I have to admit that at that age, I really didn't understand the depths of that statement. I do now. And today, I believe that every-one I preach to has a wound someplace. Maybe they know it. Maybe they don't. But something has hurt them and they're affected by the wound and many are feeling pain.

I read the newspaper from cover to cover everyday. It's almost always a litany of bad news. I got depressed after reading it on Tuesday. There was one tragic story after another. The one in Saturday's paper about the tragic accident that killed a father and two of three triplets near Pittsburgh deeply subdued my spirit. I said to myself, "Maybe I should take a month or so off from the paper."

An article in the paper recently was about the number of college students needing psychological help. A survey of 366 campus counseling centers said that they're being asked to provide treatment for a wide range of problems and that more students than ever are taking psychiatric medication and being hospitalized. People are feeling broken much earlier in life.

Maybe you're thinking that some levels of people don't experience suffering. Perhaps the rich and famous, for instance. The list of suffering in those ranks is staggering. Just think about the Kennedy's. Perhaps you remember that Michael Jordan's father was murdered. In Parade magazine last week, Tom Cruise said, "You don't live life and not know heartache, sorrow, and fear. You learn that those things are just part of life."

Recently I asked myself, "What should have been our first clue that life was going to be hard?" Answer? Nursery rhymes! As little toddlers we should have learned right then that life's going to be pretty tough. I mean, nursery rhymes are loaded with episodes from the painful and morbid side of life. Listen to some of them:

Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top,  
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock;  
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,  
Down will come baby, cradle and all.

Jack and Jill went up the hill,  
To fetch a pail of water.  
Jack fell down and broke his crown,  
And Jill came tumbling after.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,  
She had so many children she didn't know what to do.

She gave them some broth without any bread,  
She whipped them all soundly and sent them to bed.

Solomon Grundy, born on a Monday,  
Christened on Tuesday, married on Wednesday,  
Took ill on Thursday, worse on Friday,  
Died on Saturday, buried on Sunday,  
This is the end of Solomon Grundy.

Goosey, goosey gander, whither shall I wander?  
Upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber.  
There I met an old man who would not say his prayers,  
I took him by the left leg and threw him down the stairs.

The maid was in the garden,  
Hanging out her clothes;  
There came a little blackbird and snipped off her nose.

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.

I think we can all relate to Humpty Dumpty. Sometimes we feel like we've been shattered by certain events and circumstances in life and we're not quite sure we can ever put the pieces of our lives back together.

There was a period in my life when I felt very much shattered. On Valentine's Day 1995, I went into our basement to search for the very first Valentine's card I ever gave Marie. I keep all that stuff. After a 45-minute search, I found it. Marie was in the kitchen. I put my arms around her and showed her the card. As I embraced her, I said, "I gave you this card 25 years ago. We've had an incredible ride together. Almost everything has gone right. But we won't arrive at the next 25 years like this. We're sure to lose some parents, many of the people we now know and love will die, we'll see some hard things we've never seen before, and there's no guarantee we'll both see 50 years together." Real romantic, huh?

It was like a prophecy. The next afternoon my father was killed in a car crash. Within a year, the church hit some tough times and we lost a lot of people. And just months later, my oldest son was severely injured in a car crash. I felt like my life was in pieces and I wasn't sure they could be put back together in any real meaningful way. But I found that Jesus was able to put together the broken pieces of my life and make something beautiful and good.

God led me to Hebrews 2:9-18 today. It's a great passage of hope for those who have been shattered by sin and suffering in life. There's so much good truth in these verses. But what I want to do is to give you five great reasons for hope when you feel wounded and shattered and don't really think life will be beautiful again.

## **Reason #1—Jesus is alive!**

Right now, this moment, Jesus is alive. He's not dead! Two thousand years ago, He rose from the grave. Maybe you never realized this before, but if Jesus did not rise from the dead, our Bible would be much shorter than it is. You'd have all of the Old Testament. That was all before Jesus lived. But the New Testament would be a different story. You'd have the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But the last chapter or so of each of them wouldn't be there because they're about the resurrection. That's where the Bible would end because the rest of the New Testament is about what happened as a direct result of Jesus rising from the dead.

Praise God, the entire New Testament is a great witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our text today is encouraging teaching about the current ministry of the risen, living Christ. Verse 9 says that Jesus suffered death but is now crowned with glory and honor. That's a statement about Christ's life after the grave. We learn

in Ephesians 1 and Philippians 2 that Jesus was exalted to the right hand of the Father when He ascended into Heaven. Jesus is alive!

Our passage today is about what the living Jesus is doing right now for people. In verse 11, we're told that Jesus sanctifies believers. That means that He sets us apart in holiness for Himself. Verse 16 says that Jesus gives us help when we're in trouble. And in verse 18, we see that He comes to the aid of those who are tested and tempted so they aren't destroyed. That's all "present tense ministry" by Jesus Christ! Right now He's putting broken pieces together for us because He's alive.

Jesus isn't just a person of history or a nice religious idea. He's alive and wants to minister to us now while we live here on earth. That's a great reason for hope if you're hurting. Here's the second reason for hope:

### **Reason #2—Jesus solved our sin problem (Heb. 2:10, 17).**

The whole reason there's pain and suffering in the world is because sin invaded God's creation. Sin is anything that happens outside the will and character of God. Even though it might not look bad at first, sin is always destructive and ultimately leads to death (Rom. 6:23). So sin is the reason we suffer and sin is the reason we die.

Sin swings in three directions. First, the world is in rough shape because of the original sin of Adam and Eve. According to the Bible, when they sinned, the world fell into the hands of Satan and under the judgment of God. From Genesis 3 on, the Bible is the record of shattered lives and God's attempt to put the pieces back together.

The second direction of sin is the sins of others. People around us sin and when they do, it causes wounds. These wounds can go deep. When a spouse cheats, it's devastating. When a parent is an alcoholic or abusive, it follows adult children for years. When a son or daughter chooses the wrong path, parents feel heartache. When a trusted friend betrays you, you feel the fabric of your soul rip. The sins of others do a lot of damage.

The third direction of sin is our own sin. We all sin. We don't always feel the results of our own sin right away because it often appears as pleasure or as something justifiable. But eventually it turns sour and we feel pain and we've done it to ourselves.

Here's the good news of hope. Verse 17 says that Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest to go before God and remedy our sin problem. As high priest, verse 17 says that Jesus made propitiation for our sins (cf. Rom. 3:23). That sounds like a big word. It simply means that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross removed our sins and delivered us from the justly deserved wrath of God so that we could have a relationship with Him.

Do you see the hope here? Jesus took care of the sin that would have eventually destroyed us. Even though the effects of sin are still present in the world, those who call out to Christ for forgiveness get their sins forgiven. In addition, they open themselves completely to the help of Jesus to deal with their pain and suffering now! The greatest thing that can happen to you is to know that your sins have been forgiven. I hope you've trusted the Savior because forgiven people will never be destroyed by sin. Jesus made sure that sin can't permanently shatter our lives!

Here's the third reason for hope for the broken:

### **Reason #3—Jesus defeated death and Satan (Heb. 2:14-15).**

This whole passage is talking about Jesus taking on humanity—flesh and blood. That had to happen so that He could accomplish certain things for us. For instance, verse 9 says that Jesus had to become human so He could taste death for everyone. Verse 14 tells us that Jesus had to become a human being because it was the only way He could solve our two biggest problems—death and Satan.

I don't know about you, but I hate death. I've had to say good-bye to a lot of people I love. And even though I'll be thrilled to go to Heaven, I still want some time here. If my doctor said I only had 6 months to live, I'd be pretty upset.

And Satan? The longer I live the more I despise him. As a pastor, I see his destructive work in so many places.

Jesus said in John 10:10 that the devil has come only to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus was right on. It hurts to see all the wounds and destruction that happen to people because of Satan's work.

You see, Satan's goal is destroy everyone he can. He wants to mess up your life. He wants to mess up your marriage and family. And ultimately, he wants to see you die and join him in hell.

But Jesus said, "I'm going to take that power away from the devil." So as a human being, when Jesus died and rose from the dead, He broke the stranglehold of death Satan had on human beings. He didn't destroy Satan and death in that moment. That day is still ahead (Rev. 20:10, 14). But verse 14 says that Jesus rendered the devil power-less over death. When Jesus rose from the grave, He defeated Satan and death.

Do you know what that means? Because Jesus died and rose again, if we have accepted Christ as Savior, even though we'll die physically, the devil can't claim us in hell. We'll go to heaven. And even though we're tempted to sin, Jesus broke the power of Satan to rule our lives. We can have victory over the pull to do wrong. Verse 15 says that we no longer have to fear death and be a slave to sin all of our lives. When our lives seem broken by death and Satan, does that give us hope or what?

There's a fourth reason for hope:

#### **Reason #4—Jesus understands our pain and suffering and loves to help His people more than anything else He does (Heb. 2:16-18).**

A few weeks ago, some warning lights came on in my dashboard. I had to have some repair work done on my car. The lights told me there was a problem. I want you to know something. When you get wounded, when you're in pain, when you're suffering, it's like having warning lights flash before Jesus. It captures His attention. He's drawn to your situation. And He wants to do something about it.

The only way He could do anything was for Him to be-come like one of us, to become human. He had to experience all the pain and wounds and suffering that we experience. It was necessary that He completely identify with us so He could understand and help us. Verse 10 says that Jesus' suffering perfected Him. That does not mean that there was an imperfection in Christ. It means that He completed a process of suffering on earth that proved He was qualified to both save and help those in need.

Verse 17 reinforces the reason Jesus had to become human. It says, "He had to be made like His brethren in all things." Why? Not only so He could take away our sin. But verse 18 says that since He Himself was tempted or tested in that which He has suffered as a human being, He's able to come to the aid of those who are tempted and tested. Jesus walked the road we walk. He understands it. He came through temptations and suffering victoriously. He knows what we need and He can help us.

Friends, Jesus knows what wounds and suffering are. He was viciously opposed for three years while He ministered. He was beaten and hung on a cross. And He knows what temptation is. He was intensively tempted at the beginning of His ministry for 40 days in the wilderness and in Gethsemane the night before He died. Jesus was tempted and tested more deeply than anyone of us. He found Himself in the position of having to trust God in His pain when He said in verse 13, "I will put My trust in Him." So when we're hurting, Jesus understands. When we need help, He's able to come to our aid.

I have a counseling ministry. I try to help people. Do you know where I'm most effective? In the areas where I've struggled. I can chat about almost anything with you. But unless I've gone through what you've gone through, I'm not going to be as effective with you.

Jesus is the one person who's been through it all. Therefore He understands everything you're going through. You might be thinking, "But Jesus was never married and He never had kids", regardless of what "The DaVinci Code" says. But listen, the Bible says that Jesus was wounded for our transgressions (Isa. 53:5) and He bore the sins of the whole world on Himself (1 Pet 2:24). When He did that, He took on the pain of everyone at their deepest level. He experienced all our sin and pain while remaining sinless Himself. He understands what you're going through!

Now see what verse 16 says? Jesus loves to help human beings. That word “help” means “to take hold of”. Jesus loves to come to us and hold us securely so we won’t be destroyed by our wounds and pain. What’s more, the verse says that Jesus chooses to help us rather than angels. That’s incredible! Jesus helps human beings of faith over the angels. In fact, He has mobilized angels to help us (Heb. 1:14). The focus of Christ’s ministry right now is to help human beings—namely, you and me.

Talk about hope for the wounded! When we feel pain, Jesus notices and says, “Help’s on the way!” It’s part of the way He reshapes the broken pieces of our lives. The Bible is full of ways that Jesus ministers to the hurting right now. But I want to highlight just one of them.

It’s the next reason for hope for the wounded.

### **Reason #5—Jesus uses others to help those who are hurting (II Cor. 1:4-5).**

Friends, this is a major way Jesus helps us. He sends people that He’s gifted to help others. And He uses people who have been through suffering themselves. II Corinthians 1:4-5 is so clear about this. Paul says that God comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. People who know pain and have been touched by God are able to reach out to those who are hurting as representatives of Christ. Jesus ministers help through other human beings He has touched.

Now back to Hebrews 2. In verses 11-13, Jesus calls those who know Him as Savior “family”. He’s our brother and we’re brothers and sisters to each other. Part of that relationship is brother helping brother and sister helping sister when things are difficult. And while Jesus ministers to those in pain personally, He also sends other human beings to minister in His name and on His behalf.

There’s nothing worse than facing your pain all alone or thinking no one cares. Great comfort and help comes from people who come to your aid when you’re hurting. Your pain needs to become someone else’s pain or you’ll suffer more than you should and eventually, others will suffer too. This parable says it well:

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife opening a package. “What food might this contain?” He was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap. Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning. “There’s a mousetrap in the house!; there’s a mousetrap in the house!”

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, “Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it’s of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered.”

The mouse turned to the pig and told him, “There’s a mousetrap in the house”. The pig sympathized but said, “I’m so very sorry Mr. Mouse, but there’s nothing I can do about it but pray and that I will surely do.”

The mouse turned to the cow. She said, “Wow, Mr. Mouse. I’m sorry for you. But it’s no skin off my nose.” So the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer’s mousetrap alone.

That very night a sound was heard throughout the house like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer’s wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness she did not see that it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught.

The snake bit the farmer’s wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital and she returned home with a fever. Now everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup’s main ingredient.

But his wife’s sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer’s wife didn’t get well. She died. So many people came to her funeral, the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them.

So next time you hear that someone's facing a problem and you think that it doesn't concern you, remember that when one of us is threatened, we're all at risk. We're all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and be willing to make that extra effort to encourage each another.

I want to share with you a new ministry that's going to happen at Grace. It's called "Lighthouse". It's a ministry of people helping people who are going through difficult times in life. It's a ministry in which people can come along side you to give you support, prayer, and encouragement, and wise counsel. You don't have to feel like the mouse who faced the trap all alone.

In your program is a brochure about this ministry. It tells you a little of what this ministry is about, the people who are willing to be the ears, mouth, and feet of Jesus to you. Look at the pictures. That's the Lighthouse team. You're looking at people Jesus wants to use to help those who are hurting. There's a phone number to call on the front of the brochure. You can leave a message 24 hours a day. A team like this is going to be hope for those who are struggling. It's another way Jesus takes the broken pieces of our lives and puts them back together.

## **Conclusion**

There's so much more I could say about hope for the wounded and broken. For instance, Jesus is getting ready to make His final move. Verse 8 says that we're heading for the day when all the bad stuff will be gone forever and everything will be subject to Jesus. That time has not yet come but it's getting closer!

In the meantime, in the brokenness of our lives, Jesus is at work. He's doing something all the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't do. He's putting the broken pieces of our lives back together.

Throughout the service, you've been watching a piece of artwork develop. It represents how Jesus can make something beautiful out of the broken pieces of our lives. Sometimes it doesn't seem like it. Sometimes we try to put the pieces together ourselves and it doesn't seem to turn out so well. And sometimes it looks like Jesus can't make anything meaningful out of our broken pieces either. But trust Him, please. Jesus has made many promises including the great one in Romans 8:28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God."

When Jesus is finished, He'll have refashioned our lives into a masterful piece of art that will tell a story of glory for all eternity. There's hope for the wounded, for the broken, for the depressed because Jesus is the artist who takes what's broken and makes something beautiful out of it!

Perhaps you're hurting right now. Maybe you're wounded. Maybe you feel like the broken pieces of your life will never be put back together again. May this be the day you let Jesus come into your life to save you so He can begin His work. Or may this be the special moment in which you let Jesus know that you believe in His power to take the fragments of your life and create a work of grace that will last for eternity. Believe me, Jesus is at work taking the broken pieces of your life and making something beautiful.