
Reflection and meditation – paths to ‘fixing’ broken things.

Shattered!

I watched in horror as time stood still and my Grandmother’s precious Shelley teacup slipped from my hands. Tears flowed from my eyes as I remembered how precious it was to her and how precious it had become to me. It shattered into innumerable pieces as it hit the floor, no longer the cup of beautiful fine china with its delicate woodland imagery. But now like a shattered egg, it surrounded my feet, broken beyond repair with no resemblance of its former elegance. As I allowed my thoughts to wander through the possibility of having my cup repaired and the less than pleasing outcome, I also thought about brokenness.

Recently I have read of the Japanese art of “Kintsugi”. It is the skill of being able to take a broken piece of ceramic ware and restore it to its former shape, transforming it in the process into something of beauty, far surpassing its former function. By using a special adhesive dusted with powdered gold, silver or platinum, the artist repairs the cracks of the broken vessel and the precious metals gleam along the fault lines, transforming it from a functional item into a piece of desirable art. An item of Kintsugi is far beyond the budget of most people. I gasp at the price tag wondering that anyone could pay such an enormous amount for something, which, while immensely more beautiful than it once was, still remains a restored piece of ceramic. I mean no disrespect to the artisans who have the skill to achieve such pieces and I appreciate their ability and the time they dedicate to achieve these incredible objects.

I would love to be a “Fixer”. Given a situation that needs to be fixed, my immediate thought flies to, “What can I do?” Unlike the Japanese artisans, I am unable of my own accord to “fix” so many of life’s speed bumps. The brokenness of the dreams and situations of those I meet and of course, my own, require a wisdom and power far greater than I possess. I frequently end my day in a state of frustration knowing that try as I might, some situations are not for me to resolve. “There is a time for every purpose under Heaven.” And for a potential “Fixer” it can be a difficult lesson to learn.

The perfect solution

Thankfully, our Father has provided the perfect solution. Like the gold used by the Japanese artists, through the pure, tried gold of our Lord’s obedience, Jesus takes our brokenness, covering our sins and by reflecting His righteousness we are redeemed. We are transformed into the type people we desire to be but who of our own accord cannot achieve. In our transformed state we may approach our God, the Great Creator and address Him as “Father”. I cannot express the enormity of this privilege. The price of our restored state? It cannot be measured in dollars and cents or yen, as the case may be. The price of our transformation is beyond that type of calculation. I am quick to recognize that our Lord’s obedience was the price of our privileged position. He paid it willingly, to the point of an undeserved, cruel crucifixion. He became the sacrificial Lamb, without any blemishes, any cracks of sin, who loved beyond himself, to obey the Father that we could be redeemed. That price is without measure. But I also wonder at the day-to-day cost – how did Jesus deal with the enormous stresses of the broken world He experienced?

I suspect that Jesus understood from an early age that his journey would ultimately lead to Golgotha. The brokenness of the nation at the hands of spiritual leaders whose self-interest and hypocrisy led Jesus to despair as he likened the people to “sheep without a shepherd.” The clambering crowds whose human illnesses demanded his time and healing; the ever-present wiliness of the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees was an emotional toll that I can’t begin to imagine. “Jerusalem, Jerusalem how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings – and you would not. Your house is left to you – desolate!” (Luke 13:34) What heart wrenching sorrow and frustration flow through those words?

More than this, the Lord had the power to “fix” all of the expectations of the people as well as his personal stress, immediately, but was able to resist that temptation. Matt 26:53 says, “Or do you not think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” How did he do this and as a “would be Fixer” what do I learn from His example?

Getting closer to God

There are numerous references in the gospel records of Jesus withdrawing from the crowds to pray. He chose isolated places such as the wilderness of Judea after his baptism by John, a mountain before He selected His close disciples and of course the Garden of Gethsemane. The record tells us that Jesus spent whole nights in prayer to His Father and I wonder if not only did Jesus pray, but did He also meditate, reflecting on the old testament writings and the daily events encompassing Him?

Mark 1:34 tells us that “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” This is after, what appears to me to be, a particularly harrowing day. Firstly, the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law and then as news spread, in the evening, the whole city came to be healed of various diseases. “Having risen a long while before the dawn”; is the record telling us that Jesus spent a disturbed night, perhaps unable to sleep as He reflected on the events of the day? As the morning approached, he went to his Father in a solitary place to pray. With the new day unfolding, the people were undeterred and sought Jesus no doubt desiring more miracles of healing. The disciples seem perplexed, as after searching and finding Him they said, “Everyone is looking for you.” I fancy I can hear them saying, “What are you doing here? Don’t you know the people need you?” Reflection and prayer for Jesus however, had refreshed him and being refocussed on the primary purpose of His mission He was able to move forward saying, “Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” He had done what He could and now it was time to move on.

Jesus – the perfect “Fixer”

We know that Jesus did all things perfectly, and by His example I am learning the value in calmly reflecting on my efforts involving people I am endeavouring to assist. This exercise affords me an analytical look of how I might improve my efforts to comfort and support. What did I do? What did I say or think? Were my actions helpful? How could I do better next time and then come to prayer, learning that I have done what I could?

“Reflection, meditation and prayer are primary principles of caring. Reflective practice has huge benefits in increasing self-awareness, which is a key component of emotional intelligence, and in developing a better understanding of others. Reflective practice can also help you to develop creative thinking skills, and encourages active engagement in work processes. Reflect on your experience. Think about what you did, thought, and felt at the time.” (Kofoed 2011)

These lessons are certainly evident in Jesus, and when the frustration of my inability to resolve situations become overpowering, I remember his example. He is the ultimate Fixer. He is able right our wrongs and heal our brokenness with far more than specks of precious metals. One day by the gracious gift of our Father, we may experience a world of complete restoration. One with no glaring flaws of sin but a creation at peace reflecting the perfect love, righteousness and justice of our God in Heaven.

What perfection, what perfect craftsmanship!

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