

Mark 2:17

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 2023
Pastor Sam Rodebaugh

And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

A mother was getting Christmas cookies ready to send to school with her third-grader. As she carefully packed the cookies into the Tupperware container, her son said, "Don't forget the broken ones! Our teacher likes the broken ones!" Of course, his mother guessed the truth behind his claim—his teacher didn't necessarily like or prefer broken cookies. Rather, once the children had taken all the perfect cookies, the teacher took what was left over. She was willing to content herself—and keep the classroom peace—by taking the broken ones for herself.

Of course, no one would ever actually prefer broken merchandise. No one would ever go out of their way to seek out damaged goods, to buy the ones with flaws and failings—unless that merchandise came highly discounted. But no one would ever pay full price for something broken. No one . . . except Jesus, that is. **Jesus Likes the Broken Ones.** Jesus came to seek and to save the lost and straying. Jesus reached out to the despised of the world, to tax collectors and sinners. And when the Pharisees criticized Him for it, Jesus replied, ***"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."***

Jesus likes the broken ones. And it's a good thing for us that He does! It's a good thing that He invites sinners to come to Him, for that's what you and I are. We're sinners who have failed time and again to keep His commandments. We're broken and damaged goods, with many, many failings in our past. But—Jesus likes the broken ones. In fact, He prefers them. That's why the Psalmist says, ***"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise."*** (Psalm 51:17)

And that may be the most amazing aspect of the event we're celebrating this evening. At Christmas, we, the broken ones of earth, welcome our God. Not a God who thunders and intimidates with His majesty, but a God who tenderly invites us to approach His cradle and receive His mercy. We see God in human form, the deity clothed in flesh, a little baby in a manger, a child of whom not even the most wretched sinner need be afraid.

For Jesus likes the broken ones. He restores the prodigal. He cleanses the leper. He gives sight to the blind. He stands over the bed of the paralyzed man and says, ***"Son, be of good cheer—your sins are forgiven you."*** (Matthew 9:2) He reaches out to every one of us and says, ***"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*** (Matthew 11:28)

So, let's go to the manger once again. Let's join the shepherds and bow down and worship. And if you're not perfect, if you have a broken past full of sins and mistakes, don't worry. **Jesus Likes the Broken Ones.** Amen.