

Living in a Broken World with Broken People *Let's Show up with Grace, Compassion, and Hope*

Text: Isaiah 60:1-3; Psalm 11; Matthew 13:24-29; 36-43

Thesis: It is clear from the news and our experiences that we live in a broken world with broken people. It is in times like these that we discover that we need a savior, that we need hope, and that we need a future.

This is a seriously broken world with seriously broken people. We currently face disasters, tragedies, and cultural brokenness. It seems like the world, people, and cultures are coming apart at the seams.

People are shaken. Some people are struggling with fear. Many of our lives are overwhelmed with current stories of disaster, tragedy, and brokenness: hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, floods, mass murder, genocide, racial tensions, unjust, etc. It is understandable that many hearts are weary and overwhelmed by the sheer number of catastrophes and disasters.

People are crying out: some in anger and frustration, some in disillusionment, some in bitterness, and some in hopelessness.

It is in this current context that we find ourselves. How will we show up?

Some of us want to live in an either / or world. We want things to be black and white. We want to find the one solution or the one answer. But as we have taught here, we are called to live in the midst of the brokenness. We are called to live in the tensions of life. The tensions of life are meant to be creative tensions. We are called to live on the straight and narrow that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). There are ditches of either / or on both sides of the narrow road. It is natural to bounce back between either / or. But, we are called to live in the middle, in both / and.

The truth is that most of us don't like living in the tensions of life. It is easier to default to looking for simple, quick answers. Unfortunately, life is very complex, and simply working to get rid of the tensions is a frustrating and fruitless way of living.

Let me give you an example of what I am talking about.

Some people believe that the world is getting better and that, given enough time, energy, and resources, we can solve our problems on our own.

Other people believe that the world is getting worse and that we are headed to ultimate self-destruction. The world is hopeless and disintegrating.

What does the Scripture say about our world?

Isaiah 60:1 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. 2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD

rises upon you and his glory appears over you. 3 Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Isaiah 60:1-3 gives us the context of this world in which we live. The truth is, *this world is getting better and better, worse and worse, faster and faster*, as Pastor Steve has taught us.

People say to God: Why don't you fix this? Why did you let this happen? If you loved us, where are you? Why doesn't God stop evil and solve our brokenness?

We want to blame someone. We want to fix things. We want easy answers.

We have trusted in governments, in our finances, in our ourselves, in our policies and security systems, in our wisdom and resources. As a culture, we have told God that we don't need or want him, both in our policies and behaviors.

The hearts of people are failing because of fear and hopelessness. The lives of people are being shaken at every level. Our lives are overwhelmed by the sheer amount of stress, strain, and brokenness.

It is in times like these that we discover that we need a savior, that we need hope, and that we need a future. Jesus is our savior, hope, and future.

The world is getting better and better, worse and worse, faster and faster. It is in such a context that the Lord gives us an opportunity. This is our time to arise and shine for the Lord (Isaiah 60:1-3). **The Lord is asking us to arise intentionally and shine with and for him.**

There are many Scriptures that speak to living in a broken world and with broken people. Let's look at Psalm 11 together. We will consider the Message paraphrase of this Psalm.

Psalm 11:1 I've already run for dear life straight to the arms of GOD. So why would I run away now when you say, "Run to the mountains; 2 the evil bows are bent, the wicked arrows aimed to shoot under cover of darkness at every heart open to God. 3 The bottom's dropped out of the country; good people don't have a chance"?

*4 But God hasn't moved to the mountains. His address hasn't changed. He's in charge, as always, his eyes taking everything in, his eyelids unblinking, examining Adam's unruly brood inside and out, not missing a thing.... 7 **GOD's business is putting things right; he loves getting the lines straight, Setting us straight. Once we're standing tall, we can look him straight in the eye (Psalm 11:4, 7 MSG).***

People say, "What good is it to believe in God? Why did God allow this to happen? Where is your God now? Look at where this country has gone, at what this country has become. Good people don't have a chance."

According to Psalm 11, God has not changed addresses. He has not gone anywhere. He is still in charge. He is still at work. In the midst of the flooding in Greater Houston, it could have been 94 percent of the homes being flooded. Rather, it was 94 percent of the homes which didn't flood. By his grace, not every plan of evil comes to fruition in this world, for the Lord frustrates the plans of the wicked. Not every act of evil comes to full expression. Even in the midst of tragedy, God moves with mercy and grace, mitigating the devastation of this broken world and its people.

Praise the Lord. God's business is putting things right. He is at work in our day. And, we get to join him. We want to get in action, partnering with the Lord in prayer and partnership, working for the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:10).

Let's consider another scripture that helps us understand our context and what the Lord is doing.

The Parable of the Weeds

Matthew 13:24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

28 "An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

29 "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons [subjects] of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

We are living in a context in which the goodness of the kingdom of God and the evil of the devil's wicked kingdom are coming to full maturity... together... and at the same time. It won't be either / or. It will be both / and.

How then should we live?

Let's be a people of grace, compassion, and hope

In the midst of the pain of this broken world and in midst of broken people, we are called to live in a different way. We are called to live as a people of grace, compassion, and hope:

1. **Let's get in the gap and embody grace**, asking for mercy for people (Ezekiel 22:30). Let's not just look to blame, to fix, or to control. Rather, let's cry out for mercy and choose to fill the gap with lives that embody dependency upon God.

2. **Let's get in the gap and embody compassion**, empathizing with those who are scared and hurting (Romans 12:15; Matthew 22:36). Let's not just say that we care, **but let's show that we care by doing good in the midst of pain and brokenness.**
3. **Let's get in the gap and embody hope**, sharing our stories of hope, comfort, and grace in God (Romans 15:13). Let's not offer simple answers. Let's share about the hope, comfort, and grace that we have in Jesus. Let's not tell others what they need to do. Let's share how the Lord is our rock, our shield, our hope, and our future in the midst of incredible shaking.

Here are some skills that we need to develop and exercise in this current context:

1. **Practice authenticity**: we have an opportunity to grow in our capacity to be open and honest about what we are thinking, feeling, and believing. **Let's just share openly and honestly.**
 - a. The enemy tempts us to isolation. Our tendency to self-protect tempts us to isolate and to carry our burdens alone and in isolation.
 - b. We don't need to have all the answers: let's share where we are, what we are feeling, and what we believe. Let's share our hurts, disappointments, concerns, and hopes.
 - c. We need each other.
 - d. Find safe places to share. We share what our current reality is and what our desired future is.
 - e. Point: Talk with somebody.
2. **Connect with others**: we have an opportunity to grow in our ability to connect with others, to express compassion, and to come alongside others. We weren't make to have all the answers in ourselves. **Let's just show up.**
 - a. **The ministry of presence.** We don't have to have all of the answers. Just showing up makes a difference.
 - b. **The ministry of introduction.** We might not have the answers or solutions, but we can get in the gap and help connect others with the Lord, with resources, and with help.
 - c. **The ministry of sacrificial love.** Let's give away our time, talents, and treasure. Your little can become a lot in the hands of the Lord.
3. **Listen deeply**: we have an opportunity to grow in our capacity to empathize, to let people share their hearts and to feel what they feel. What are they scared of? Where they are disappointed? Where they are frustrated? **Let's just be available.**
 - a. Listen.
 - b. Ask questions to understand.
 - c. Be a safe place. Don't judge. Don't fix. Don't parent and tell them what to do.
 - d. Listen well. Then, ask if you can share. Simply share what you think, feel, and believe. Don't tell them what to do.
 - e. Ask permission to share your story. Share what the Lord is doing in you and how he is helping you. Share what you are learning.

4. **Love well:** we have an opportunity to grow in our ability to love well and unconditionally. **Let's just show that we care.**
 - a. The people whom the Lord wants us to reach in our culture don't think like us, don't value what we value, and don't have the same world view. But, they are people created in the image of God with hopes, dreams, and needs. We can't just look for and love the people that have our same values and vision.
 - b. Loving well means persevering. We are in this for the long haul. Let's not quit loving people when it gets hard and messy.
 - c. People aren't projects. They are created in the image of God. They deserve to be loved well, whether or not they choose to believe in Jesus or change like we want for them.
 - d. Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). The truth must not be used as a club to bludgeon people into acceptance and obedience but must always be presented in love, as an invitation and opportunity.
 - e. Serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need. Work for the common good. Seek to restore and work for reconciliation.

Here is the kingdom we are working for:

The kingdom of God is righteousness [goodness, God setting things right], peace [shalom in the Biblical understanding of "peace"], and joy [celebration] in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

That is the kingdom that is here now and is coming in its fullness one day. That is the kingdom that we get to anticipate in the here and now by showing up with grace, compassion, and hope.

Ministry Time

1. If you are depleted of strength or energy, we want to pray for you. The Lord wants to touch you and meet you this morning.
2. If you are struggling emotionally or hurting in your heart, we want to pray for you.
3. If you need healing or hope, we want to pray for you.
4. If the Lord is speaking to you to repent of anger, judgment, and cynicism, simply agree with the Lord, apologize, and ask for the help of the HS to let go and change. The Lord will help you.