

Blessed, broken and given



John Evans

listening



Hello, my name is John.

The theme of this year's Lenten Programme is Blessed + Broken ... well that sort of sums up my life's journey so far.

While living in New Zealand in my mid-thirties I looked at becoming a Police Officer. I was invited to go out with an officer as an observer to see what I thought of it. We went to a house to talk with a teenager who had been firing an air rifle in a public place. When we entered the house I saw several children aged between four and fifteen years of age sitting against the walls of the lounge and kitchen area. There was no furniture whatsoever in the house, not even a chair. There was no sound of children having fun. The children were in poor physical condition and were staring blankly into the middle of the room.

When I returned to the car I asked the police officer what could be done to help the children and he said that it was not what he was there for at that time and that other organisations were taking care of it. For the next few days I could not get the look of loneliness that I had seen in the children's eyes out of my mind. I knew it was a look of loneliness because I knew it well; I had seen it in my own eyes most of the time when I looked into a mirror. I felt a deep loneliness all around me even though I had plenty of friends and was raised in a family and had all the material things I needed. I played Rugby from a young age, which is what most young boy's in New Zealand did. I made many friends throughout the years playing rugby and had many friends at school also, but still the loneliness remained in me right through into my adulthood.

The deep loneliness I felt came from abuse I suffered as a child. It left me in a battle within myself that I was struggling to win. While I have the highest respect for the work that police officers do, I knew, after that incident with the police officer, I would take a different path. I felt called to choose a vocation where I would be helping and engaging with people face to face. So I studied and became an Alcohol and Drug Counsellor and worked in Mental Health.

As an adult I look back on my life now and I can recognize the loneliness, but when I was a child I just felt sad and broken. I didn't have a lot of fight left in me. Even when I have had good days and fun days, the weight of the abuse seemed to weigh heavily on me. I started drinking and smoking in my early teens which progressed to heavy drinking and drug use by my late teens.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Blessed
+
Broken

At the age of 22 I met my wife to be Sally. She was a breath of fresh air in my life. She loved life, her family, and her Catholic faith, and she is an inspiration to me still today. As I had not heard about God, I had plenty of questions for Sally about her faith. She taught me about Jesus and I began to realise that I couldn't live my life through Sally's faith, I had to find more about Jesus for myself.

I became a Catholic in my late 20's and began to learn about who I was in Christ. I was able to see blessings that had taken place throughout the brokenness of my life. Even though I was beginning what I saw as a new life with Sally, I still made lots of mistakes throughout my married life. I had a wonderful wife and children, but in the midst of all this I was still lonely.

I knew – well to be honest Sally knew – that I had to sort myself out. I spent time in counselling over the years learning about the effects my abuse had on my life, I actually thought I had dealt with everything up until around two years ago. Out of the blue, heaviness came over me that I couldn't overcome by myself. I finally made a decision and began a real journey to sorting myself out. I spent several months seeing a Psychologist, and I got on top of the depression & PTSD that I was suffering from as a result of my abuse.

I thought I was having a crisis of faith because I was seeking help and not trusting in the Lord, however I worked out that talking with someone properly about my abuse helped me to clear my head enough to see that Jesus was right there and my relationship with Jesus grew from strength to strength. It was through that relationship with Jesus that I was able to find true forgiveness for the people, who hurt me – and I don't say that lightly. I was then able to set myself free.

I want to finish with a scripture quote that means a lot to me from Isaiah:

And now O' Lord, You are our Father, yet truly we are clay, and you are our Maker and we are all the works of your hand. (Isaiah 64: 8)

Because of the decisions and actions of individuals toward me when I was a child, I was moulded in a certain way. But I know Jesus and the Bible well enough to know that God is my Potter. He has always had a good plan for my life and others altered that plan for a while, but I know above everything that I think feel or see that God continues to mould me into His likeness.

We know from Statistics that men, particularly, are reluctant to seek professional help. Today there are a range of excellent services available, on the web, over the phone and face to face. So if you are lonely or suffering, dealing with an addiction or depression get in touch with someone today, talk to someone in your parish, seek out the help you need.

The Potter is waiting to remind you that even through your brokenness you are always blessed, and, you always were ... are ... and forever will be, a beloved son, a beloved daughter of God.



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