
“What Do You Say To The Broken-Hearted?”

Isaiah 35:1-10

“3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, He will come with vengeance; with divine retribution He will come to save you.”

Isaiah 35:3-4 (NIV)

Children’s Sermon:

Needed: A broken toy

Guess what’s coming in just a couple of weeks? That’s right! Christmas. What are you hoping to get for Christmas? (Ask for responses). What thing do you want more than anything else? (Ask for more responses).

There’s all kinds of neat things we can get for Christmas. Some of us will get clothes, some dolls, some computer games and who knows what other kinds of toys we might get.

How would you feel if you opened up a brand-new toy for Christmas, the one you’ve been wanting more than anything else. You play with it, you show it to your family and friends and you play with it every day. Then, one day, it breaks.

I have a broken toy. (Show the broken toy). No, I don’t play with toys, but when it broke, I was sad. How do you think I felt? Have you ever felt that way? If your toy broke or got lost, what would you want someone to say to you?

Sometimes sad things happen in our lives. We can find our grandparent might have to go to the hospital, that mommy and daddy are arguing at each other, or maybe a friend of ours at school is sick, or someone we know gets in a car accident.

What do we say in those times? We can say, “I’m sorry”. But there’s other things we can say, too. What might some of those things be? (get responses). “I’ll pray for you” or “Don’t worry, Jesus will take care of you.”

That’s what Christmas is all about. Jesus came because something was broken. It wasn’t a toy. It was the world. We sinned. But Jesus said, “I don’t want those people to be sad.” So what did He do? He came to us on Christmas to “fix” us by saving us from our sins.

Why did He do that? Oh, we all know why. Because He loved us! And that’s the most important thing you can say to someone who is sad: “Jesus loves you.”

Sermon:

As I watch television during the Christmas season, one of my favorite things to watch are the Christmas music specials. Over the years many of our favorite singers and groups have had these specials. Who’s your favorite singer? Bing Crosby? Neil Diamond? Charlotte Church? Or Christian singers like Sandi Patty?

Who are your favorite choirs? The choirs and Christmas presentations of area churches? I love the music of our own choir...especially at Christmas. I also enjoy the Canadian Brass, Mannheim Steamroller and some good 18th century organ music like that of Johann Sebastian Bach.

All of us have our favorite songs. Why do we like them? I think one of the greatest reasons is that they give us hope, happiness and joy. Christmas songs are, I believe, one good answer to the question Isaiah answered in our text, “What do you say to the broken-hearted?”

One of the most recent musical phenomenons this Christmas is Josh Groban. This guy can sing *anything*—opera or contemporary, secular or religious—in any language you want. You’ve probably heard a number of his songs.

One of his greatest Christmas songs is “Believe.” Here’s an excerpt from the song. (or play it).

“Believe”

Children, sleeping. Snow is softly falling.
Dreams are calling, Like bells in the distance.
We were dreamers, Not so long ago.
But one by one, we All had to grow up.
When it seems the magic slipped away...
We find it all again on Christmas Day.

Believe in what your heart is saying, Hear the melody that's playing
There's no time to waste, There so much to celebrate.
Believe in what you feel inside, And give your dreams the wings to fly.
You have everything you need, if you just Believe.
If you just believe. If you just believe.
If you just believe...just believe...just believe.

That’s Josh Groban’s answer for “What do you say to the broken-hearted?” “Just believe.”

“Just believe” is Isaiah’s prescription, too. Unlike Josh’s secular words of encouragement, the prophet Isaiah comforts the people of God with something more than “just believe.” Isaiah’s message is an appeal to *true* faith and trust in God.

What do you say to the broken-hearted? Here’s Isaiah’s answer.

“3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...He will come to save you."
Isaiah 35:3-4 (NIV)

He will come and save you, Isaiah says. Just believe.

Perhaps the hardest thing in life is not just dealing with the brokenness, but it’s trying to find our way while we’re picking up the pieces. While we’re still weak, foundering, confused or grieving the loss of some of life’s greatest joys and experiences, we become broken-hearted.

It's hard enough to know what to say to *others* when they are broken-hearted, distraught or crying, let alone what to say to ourselves to comfort us!

The good news, however, is that what we say to others and what we say to ourselves is the same answer. It's the answer Isaiah gives us.

“3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...He will come to save you."
Isaiah 35:3-4 (NIV)

“Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...He will come to save you.” All that the broken-hearted people of Isaiah's day needed to do was to believe...that God will come to save you. All that we need to do when we are wondering what to say to the broken-hearted is to listen to the prophet “Isaiah Groban.” Believe. And all we need to hear when we are broken-hearted, sad, and lonely, is... “believe.”

And when we believe, we can have strength in Isaiah's promise,

“Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...He will come to save you."
Isaiah 35:3-4 (NIV)

The Heart

There's a story of a little boy who needed radical heart surgery. "Tomorrow morning," the surgeon began, "I'll open up your heart tomorrow. I don't know what I'll find, but I'll fix it."

"You'll find Jesus there," the boy said.

Just before the surgery the doctor assured the little boy. “Everything will be all right.” “I know,” the little boy said, “I know things will be all right because when you open my heart, you'll find Jesus is there.”

After the surgery, the surgeon sat in his office, crying. He recorded his notes from the surgery, "...damaged aorta, damaged pulmonary vein, widespread muscle degeneration. No hope for transplant, no hope for cure. Therapy: painkillers and bed rest. Prognosis:," here he paused, "death within one year."

With great tears, he stopped the recorder, saying. "Why God? Why God? How could you do this?"

After surgery, the boy awoke and whispered, "Did you cut open my heart?" "Yes," said the surgeon. "What did you find?" asked the boy.
"I found Jesus there," the surgeon answered.

The boy believed. When the surgeon saw the boy's confident faith, the surgeon believed and was strengthened.

What do *you* say to the broken-hearted? Just believe. God will come and save you!

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Christmas is a time engulfed in “belief.” We are called to believe in Santa Claus, in giving, in love and in family. We are called to believe in joy, in peace and in goodwill to men. We are called to believe that there still is hope...and a future.

But the greatest belief is to believe that God will come and save us. As we anticipate celebrating the fulfillment of God’s promise to send His Son to save us, perhaps now is as good of time as any to believe. God has been faithful. He has come to save you and me.

So, what do you say to the broken-hearted? The same thing Isaiah said almost three thousand years ago.

“3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...He will come to save you."

Isaiah 35:3-4 (NIV)

It worked then. It works today. Be strong...God has come to you...to save you, to strengthen you and to live in your heart. Even so, come Lord Jesus! Heal us who are broken-hearted.

Amen.

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