

The Rev. Alanna Sullivan:

Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter Book, Psalm 92, found on page 46. Please stand as you are able. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to thy name, O Most High.

Congregation:

To declare your steadfast love to the morning, and your faithfulness by night.

The Rev. Alanna Sullivan:

To the music of the lute, the harp, to the melody of the lyre.

Congregation:

For Thou, O Lord, have seen me glad by thy work, at the works of thy hands I sing for joy.

The Rev. Alanna Sullivan:

The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Congregation:

They are planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God.

The Rev. Alanna Sullivan:

They still bring forth fruit in old age, and they are ever full of sap and green.

Congregation:

Showing that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Choir:

(singing).

The Rev. Alanna Sullivan:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Alanna Sullivan:

Our reading for today comes from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has been shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."

Every summer, my family travels to Colorado to spend time with my husband's family. His mother lives in the mountains in a house built by her own parents 60 years ago. In the grooves of wood and in the

fingerprints of cement and in the dings of sheet metal, you can so evidently see the love and care and unhurried attention poured into building this home. My husband's grandfather, whom we affectionately call Gramps, was a ceramicist and a collector of art. Some pieces were made by him, some made by friends, some he collected throughout his travels around the world. In this home where you might expect one painting, there are six. Every nook and cranny has a piece, and each piece has a beloved story.

There's one piece in particular, a small brown bowl with veins of gold elegantly stretching across its body, that always catches my attention. There is something about the mingling of the earthy brown and the ethereal gold that just captivates me each time. My mother-in-law has told me that this is a kintsugi bowl, "kintsugi" meaning golden repair. It is an ancient Japanese art form in which chipped or broken cups, chalices, mugs, and dishes are repaired with a gold or silver lacquer. This is interwoven with the philosophy of wabi sabi, which means to find beauty in broken things or old things. Breakage and repair are seen as a part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise. As one kintsugi master has explained, it is very important that we understand the spiritual backgrounds or history behind the material.

Since this last summer I've wondered, what would it be like if we lived with our own hearts, like these cracked, illuminated, and healed and beautiful dishes? Each one of us has experienced what it means to have a broken heart. It's part of being human. Omid Safi, a professor from Duke, writes about the theology of cracked spaces: "The God of the whole cosmos shows up in the humblest places. This is a theology of cracked spaces, of broken places, and the healing of God's presence."

So what would it be if we didn't so quickly try to glue the pieces of our lives and broken hearts back together, trying to hide the cracks, hoping that no one notices? What if the cracks are in fact the places where light breaks forth and God shines through? In *Life of the Beloved*, Henry Nouwen wrote, "The great spiritual call of the beloved children of God is to pull their brokenness away from the shadow of the curse and put it under the light of blessing. Our brokenness will gradually become to be seen as an opening towards the full acceptance of ourselves as the beloved. None of this brokenness will go away or become less, and still, embracing it and bringing it into the light of the one who calls us the beloved can make our own brokenness shine like a diamond."

I believe that this cup that I love so much is even more beautiful now that it is cracked and illuminated than it was before in its pristine condition. Paul, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, writes, "We have this treasure, this treasure of God in clay jars. We can be vessels for God's love and possibilities of grace. They can be found even within us, despite of, or perhaps because of, our cracks and chips, our imperfections and sins, for this is a good thing, because broken vessels is all that God has to work with. And this is nothing short of good news, because it means that in part God can be at work for you and me."

Will you please join me in prayer? God, let us not be afraid to show our cracked hearts to one another. Help us to hold them up to the light so that You may shine through. May we all see cracked places as golden. Amen. And will you please join me in saying the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in

heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Please stand as you are able, to sing the hymn, I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord, hymn number 271 found in your Crimson Harvard Hymnal.

Congregation:  
(singing).

The Rev. Alanna Sullivan:

So as we go into this day, may the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, and may the Lord grant you peace. And the gathered people said, amen.

Congregation:  
Amen.