

I was sharing the view of a beautiful garden with a friend, who loved flowers as much as I did. We discussed the wonderful colors and multi-varied shapes of the different types of blooms. My friend mentioned that as beautiful as this scenery was, it was actually the broken creation we were seeing. He strongly emphasized how much more awesome the original must have been. And he told me the following story:

There was a man who had a son who loved to create things with a tremendous passion. He built so many things, and considered each one a treasure. He would show his father his latest project with great pride and explain in detail its purpose and performance and his father would agree with him about how wonderful it was.

None of his projects were expendable – the boy expected them all to last forever. One time one of his creations was accidentally broken, and the boy’s father initially thought little of it. But he came to understand the seriousness of the boy’s feelings about his work. The boy was in tears when his father tried to put the creation back together. But they worked on it together until it was almost exactly back the way it was before. The boy was relieved and ready to move on to another creation. But the father never forgot the tears of the creator.

We then spent some time discussing how the Great Creator spent such effort in His creation – crafting it with tremendous care. He declared it “Good” many times¹ and it was clearly very precious to Him. The entire universe was awesome, especially the companions He made² with which to share His Love. He put His whole heart into His project.

But His protégé’s turned away from Him and “fell”³. There are those who claim that He cannot be hurt, but that is simply not true. The whole story of the depth of His Love shows His sacrificial suffering⁴ to redeem, repair, and restore that creation to its original glory⁵. Jesus, God’s Son, wept at the death of His friend Lazarus⁶; this was a reflection of His compassion for us and His passion for us. His sorrow and resulting tears demonstrate the strength and power of His love⁷, and His response to the pain of lost relationships.

Even the broken creation is so beautiful that mankind is awed by it⁸, but we have not seen the original and can’t grasp how great it was before we broke it. I remember the story about the tears of those who saw the foundation of the new temple⁹, and I imagine God’s tears at seeing His broken creation. Even so, there was some joy in the “broken” (but restored somewhat) temple¹⁰. God may have the same sense of disappointment in the broken universe, yet He loves us with an amazing grace. Perhaps it needed to be broken to really produce what He wants in us^{11,12}. Adam and Eve in the beginning had beauty in the garden and fellowship with God, but that cannot compare with the most fantastic story ever told! The story of their idyllic life was not as fantastic as that of the Love of a God suffering to serve His broken creation.

God indeed had sorrow over His broken Creation. He could have fixed it back to its original state, but He let it go. God could have done a “do-over”, tossing His creation into the cosmic garbage can. But as Jeremiah remade the marred pot¹³, God chose to work with the creation that He had made – He wanted to redeem it, because He loves it (and us)! But think of the complexity of making a broken creation continue to work; think of the healing properties of life, and other things implemented to sustain life and the universe even though it now would not last forever. It is perhaps only partially broken; it still possesses a certain beauty, and mankind is included in this.

Sometimes our life is broken, too: failure, divorce, or some other loss. When life breaks, it is usually catastrophic: we are not just talking about a few pieces that become disconnected, but an entire structure that is broken and ripped completely apart. We struggle to put the pieces back together, and find that we may have to build something else. But we can’t put it back exactly.

The important thing is that it seems God still sees Beauty in the flawed universe – and in mankind! He recognizes some beauty amidst the death and decay caused by our sin. We are not evil, but we are indeed sinners. God sees Good in us in a way similar to the way in which we are awed by the present universe. Like a flower blooming amidst the crags or rubble; perhaps God is in “awe” of what we can do (with our faith in Him and His Goodness). He may look down on us and say, “have you considered my servant...?”¹⁴ or “well done, my good and faithful servant.”¹⁵ And He can detect the smallest reflection of Himself from our souls.

We must not judge God by the way the world is now¹⁶. We must always remember that there is an opponent¹⁷ on the playing field. We must let the beauty of the (flawed) earth be to us a sacrament which makes real the beauty of holiness revealed in Jesus Christ my Lord¹⁸.

How did God feel about the universe being broken? He is sorrowful, but He is also very angry at those who take the breakage lightly. We must recognize the impact of Evil; and the power of Good! We must realize that there is great Beauty arising from this brokenness. We need to be broken to fully appreciate the Grace of God!

My friend and I continued to gaze on the beauty before us. We gave glory to the Creator of everything and His power to sustain His creation¹⁹ even though we had broken it. And we looked forward to the relief of the heavens and earth from their groaning, and the new heavens and earth²⁰ that would be our ultimate home²¹.

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1. God created the heavens and earth, and said it was "Good" many times (seven times in the first chapter of Genesis: vs 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)
2. Genesis 1:26-31
3. Genesis 2
4. John 3:16
5. Acts 3:21
6. John 11:35
7. from Hubert Humphries: It takes a strong man to cry – strong in his love for others.
8. for instance, see Psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God", etc.
9. Ezra 3:12
10. see Ezra 6:22
11. Psalm 51:17, "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."
12. Marilyn Monroe quote about things broken to make other things; "...sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together."
13. Jeremiah 18:1-6
14. Job 1:8 and 2:3
15. Matthew 25:21-23 and Luke 19:17
16. "We become Voltaire-like cynics if we judge the Creator by the way the world is now." Randy Alcorn
17. 1 Peter 5:8 and Revelation 12:9
18. slightly altered quote by John Baillie
19. Hebrews 1:3
20. 2 Peter 3:7-13 and Revelation 21:1
21. John 14:2