

## Hope in the Breaking

Autumn has a way of bringing old memories to mind. This year, I've found myself thinking back to childhood. And for some reason, my mind wandered to the nursery rhymes many of us grew up hearing. They're short, catchy, and easy to remember. But when you listen closely, some of their imagery is... well, a little disturbing.

Take "Ring Around the Rosie." Sounds innocent enough, though some think it may be rooted in the Black Plague. "Ashes, ashes, we all fall down?" Sounds like one of those creepy voiceovers you'd hear in a horror movie.

Or "London Bridge is Falling Down." Many believe it reflects the repeated need to repair or rebuild London Bridge, which has been damaged, replaced, or rebuilt many times across history. Necessary as those repairs may have been, is a bridge that keeps needing to be rebuilt really something anyone would want to sing about?

And of course, there's "Rock a bye Baby," where the bough breaks and the cradle falls. As children we didn't question it. But as adults, we may think, "Who in their right mind puts a crib in a treetop?" That's a situation most of us would call DCS about.

Yet beneath their strange imagery, these rhymes reflect something true about life. Things break. Dreams collapse. What we cherish sometimes comes tumbling down. And whether the hardship happens in our own lives or in the lives of those around us, it leaves a mark.

But here's the good news. God tells a different story. The world says, "In the breaking, everything falls." But God says, "In the breaking, I hold you. In the breaking, I give hope. In the breaking, I bring life."

The prophet Isaiah promises, "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out" (Isaiah 42:3). And the Apostle Paul reminds us, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair... struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

These promises tell us something profoundly hopeful. Even in the brokenness of this world, God remains sovereign, faithful, and present. Nothing places us beyond the reach of His grace. God meets us in our struggles, holds us there, and continues His redeeming work in ways we may not yet be able to see.

Don Payne, Associate Professor of Theology and Christian Formation at Denver Seminary, has written about this. He describes suffering not as an interruption to grace, but as part of its very texture. He writes, "God's gracious presence changes the character of our suffering because God does not merely and passively sympathize." God doesn't stand at a distance while we're hurting. He meets us in those difficult places with His grace.

Sometimes hardship shows up in our own lives. Our health changes, we struggle with loneliness, or a place that once felt like home no longer does. Other times, it is happening around us. A neighbor is worried about a stack of bills they can't pay. A co-worker is weighed down with concerns about their marriage. A friend is wrestling with anger they won't talk about.

Whether we are in the middle of suffering ourselves or walking alongside someone else, God's grace equips us to bring hope into those spaces. Sometimes that means offering encouragement. Sometimes it means praying. And sometimes it simply means being present, so another person doesn't face their struggles alone.

And nowhere do we see this hope more clearly than at the cross. Jesus entered fully into the suffering and brokenness of this world, even unto death. Yet the cross was not the end. The stone was rolled away. Christ was raised. Death did not get the final word.

That is why we can speak of hope even while something is still broken. Our hope rests in the promise that the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead is still at work bringing life where we may see only endings. Nursery rhymes may leave us with cradles falling and bridges collapsing, but the story God is writing does not end with the breaking.

As we journey further into this fall season, it's my prayer that we would be strengthened by the truth that even in our struggles, God holds us. And whether we feel that weight ourselves or are called to stand alongside someone who does, may God's grace equip us to be people of hope.

This is part of our calling as the church. We bear witness together that brokenness never gets the final word. God does.

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Jonathan