

Some years ago, at a Christmas Eve service, things were perfect. The congregation was celebrating Christmas in their new sanctuary for the first time. The church was beautiful. A large stand behind the altar had been designed to hold numerous poinsettias—and they were beautiful.

A young boy had flawlessly sung the first stanza of “Once in Royal David’s City.” The vocal and instrumental musicians were really on; their tone, energy, and volume were sensitive and beautiful. The liturgy was engaging, so that those who had not been to church for a long time (and those who had been often) were drawn together and blended with the worshippers of the Christ Child through the ages. The burning candles cast a luminous glow on the walls and on the faces of the worshippers. The preacher was focused, catching the attention of both the easily bored and the eagerly attentive.

In the congregation were children snuggled close to their parents, feeling secure and safe and loved; Dating couples, hopeful that their new interest would be someone special; Engaged couples, planning their wedding and their future; Married couples, who had worked through the struggles of their relationship and were feeling confident and secure; Older parents, some, singled by the death of their spouses, accompanied by their adult children; feeling grateful, many across demographic lines who felt good about the gifts they had received and even better about the gifts they had given. For many, it seemed a perfect Christmas.

Then, as the liturgy for Holy Communion began, the platform for the poinsettias began to lean, and suddenly, with a resounding crash, the poinsettias fell. Clay pots burst with a crack. Dirt and tangled plants spewed everywhere. It was a jaw-dropping mess.

For some, the perfect Christmas had been shattered! Especially the Altar Guild. But for most, Christmas was perfected in the sharing of the bread and the wine amid broken pots. The pots were an object lesson, that our world is broken, but into this brokenness Jesus came. In the midst of the desperate efforts for a perfect Christmas, it was only in the brokenness that Christmas became perfect.

Jesus did not come into a perfect world. It was a broken one. In John’s amazing prologue to his gospel—his biography of Jesus—he describes the world as a place of darkness. More specifically, John says that when Jesus arrived in the world He had made, the world did not receive Him, or recognize Him. That’s the essence of ‘being in the dark.’ And still, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us,” among us in a world twisted, loud, messy, with plenty of dirt to go around. Still, he came. He came as an infant, so fragile, so breakable. The time would come when He would be broken on the cross. He was fractured from God, separated from his Father as he suffered hell in our place. He took the punishment for our sins upon himself. He died for us. But His Father did not leave him in the grave. God raised him from the dead and placed him on a throne at his right hand to rule his Kingdom!

Because Jesus was broken on the cross for our sins and healed again in blessed reunion with his father, he can heal our brokenness by forgiving our sins and uniting us with himself.

That is why he was born. You may really want that perfect Christmas, but no Christmas can be perfect until our brokenness is healed in Jesus.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” Allow yourself to be stunned by these references to Jesus. Here is John, who knew Jesus well, spending a good three years getting to know him as a person, and John is able to say and inspired to say that his best friend Jesus is also the creative Word of God who ordered reality as we know it. His best friend Jesus was God in the flesh. It’s an extraordinary claim, validated by Jesus resurrection from the dead, of which John was an eyewitness. And so near the end of his biography of Jesus, John writes this, and it’s pointed directly at you and me this Christmas morning: “These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in His Name.” Believe the words about the Word, John says, and the gift of divine life is yours.

And by that Word—that very same Word— today, bread and wine is declared to be His Body and His Blood. Come to this meal of the Word made flesh. He gives us His broken body so our brokenness can be healed. Come to this holy meal that takes away our scattered messes with the touch of his great love. He does not reject or forsake us in our brokenness. He joins us and he heals us. He sits down in the dirt and the shattered pieces and gives us Himself.

Are you having a perfect Christmas? Probably not. Something in your life may have collapsed. Someone may have disappointed you. Someone may be missing from your Christmas celebration. Whatever it is, Jesus knows, and it does not prevent Him from joining you at this table, on this morning, to create something new in you by his powerful Word.

The creative Word still creates. The healing Word still heals. That saving Word rebuilds what is broken. Receive Him. Believe Him. Life in His Name is given to you.