

Broken Waffles

Mark 8:1-8 (KJV)

1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, **2** I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: **3** And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. **4** And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? **5** And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. **6** And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. **7** And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. **8** So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

My family loves waffles. We love the smell of the batter as it cooks on the waffle iron. When I travel around the country, I often stay in hotels that have the big, commercial-grade waffle irons in the lobby. They have little cups of batter and the iron is already hot so all you have to do is pour the batter onto the hot iron and start to cook. They have a timer that automatically starts and tells you when the waffle is cooked to the perfect time.

The waffles themselves are filled with baking powder so they will rise when they feel the heat. You pour the waffle batter onto the bottom of the iron, but then you flip the iron over to make sure the batter fills the nooks and crannies in the iron itself.

When it is done, you need to remove the waffle from the iron. Usually this is easy: you just pop the waffle out with a spatula and it comes off easily. Occasionally, the waffle will stick. When you open the iron, it might break in half with part of the waffle sticking to the top of the iron and the other part sticking to the bottom of the iron. You might find that the waffle will break in the middle when you are lifting it out of the iron.

“What do I do with the broken waffle?” Do you throw it away? Do you try to fix it? What do you do with a broken waffle?

Disney Experience

I went to a conference once at Walt Disney World about Customer Experience. They brought in one of the people at Disney who is responsible for customer experience and he explained some of the things they do to make sure that people experience the parks in a way that stimulates all 5 senses. They have ways of drawing you in and attracting your curiosity. For example, in Disneyland and Magic Kingdom they have castles located down the road and within eyesight when you walk in the front gate. The castles are placed so that they will make you want to go towards them and explore the park. All around the park there are details that are just around the corner and grab your attention and encourage exploration. Walt used to call these things “Wienies” because he would play a game with his dog where he would drag a hot dog along the floor and then hide it; he would then watch in delight as the dog would follow the scent to the wienie. He wanted his parks to be the same way; to have attractions that would make people follow a path and discover a secret. The attractions are there for all your senses; sight, sound, and even smell.

Of course, you also need to remember that Disney Corporation is there to separate you from your money. They know, for example, that most families have a dad. That dad probably gets just 2 weeks of vacation every year. If dad is going to spend one of those weeks of vacation at a Disney park, why then he is going to squeeze every ounce of fun he can out of that vacation. The park opens at 9:00 for everyone else, but if you stay on property it opens at 8:00. Dad gets everyone up at 6:00, gets them on the bus by 6:45, to the monorail by 7:20, and standing in line at the gates of the Magic Kingdom by 7:45. At 8:00 precisely the gates open and the family marches down Main Street USA.

The problem is that in his rush to get everyone to the front of the line, dad forgot about breakfast. So, the Disney Corporation helps him out; they pump the smell of vanilla into the air down Main Street. The smell of vanilla makes them hungry so they head over to one of the many fine restaurants in the area that just happen to be selling things that smell like vanilla like waffles. The smell of vanilla is the “wienie” that draws you in and lures you to where Disney wants you to be: in the restaurant.

If Disney had put up big signs that said, “You need to eat breakfast,” then it would not have been as effective. First off, words don’t have the emotional connection to hunger that smells do. Secondly, a sign can easily be missed or blocked by a guy taking his picture with a selfie stick. Smells, on the other hand, are pervasive; they are everywhere. Even if the guy with the selfie stick manages to block the smell with his own odor, you can just walk a few steps and it is right there in your nostrils again.

Smells tell a story; they connect with your emotions. Smells can take your memories back to a time and a place: the smell of home, the smell of mom’s cooking, or the scent of a fresh rain.

Smell of Showbread

In the Temple instructions given to Moses, there is a strange commandment given that there should always be bread before the Lord.

Leviticus 24:5-8 (KJV)

5 And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. **6** And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. **7** And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord. **8** Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

This command is strange, because God never eats the bread that is placed before him. Nor is the bread ever offered as part of a sacrifice in the fires of the Temple.

Instead the bread is renewed once a week and the old bread is given to the priests that served in the Temple. The priests would divide up the week-old bread amongst themselves, five to the high priest and the other seven to the other priests who served.

The bread is baked once a week and must be replaced in such a way that there is always bread before the Lord. The odor of the bread is important in this ceremony. It is not enough to simply place bread before the Lord; the bread must be freshly baked so that the smell fills the Temple. Unlike light from a lamp which

can be blocked by shade or a curtain, it is almost impossible to cover up the smell of freshly baked bread. The odor of the bread fills every part of the building from the bottom to the top.

But the power of the odor is only applied when the bread is fresh. Stale bread has no scent. Fresh bread fills the house with its aroma while old bread does not. That is why the priests were told to constantly bringing new bread into the presence of the Lord. The new bread covers up the smell of the old bread. It covers up the smell of the old sacrifices. The showbread represents a constant renewing of the prayers of the people in the presence of God.

As we go through life, we are sometimes able to hide the effect of our sins from those around us. To other people, sin is like light from a lamp; we can sometimes hide the sin under a shade so that no one else can see it. We become good at hiding our sins; of justifying our sins to ourselves and to those around us. We hide our sins so that even though the light of that sin burns brightly, we can hide it. But to God our sins are not a light that can be easily hidden under a shade. Our sins are not something that can be easily hidden under a heavy sweater. To God our sins are a stinky diaper.

Isaiah 64:6 (KJV) But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

The words translated as “filthy rags” can be translated as “used diaper.” Isaiah says that even the things we do well are smelly and terrible compared to God. So, if our righteousness is like a smelly diaper, how much worse must our sins be to God? We think we have hidden our secrets from everyone around us and then God walks into a room and says, “What is that smell?” He walks around with his nosed curled up trying to find out where the sin is coming from. Our sin stinks and it cannot be hidden.

God is constantly bombarded with the smell of our sins, yet he wants to abide with us. He wants to live with us, but we stink too badly. The only chance that we have for God live in our presence is to cover up the smell with something that he finds pleasant.

But not only must the smell of our sins be covered with the odor of fresh bread, the smell must be constantly renewed with fresh bread week after week. The smell that we offer to the Lord is our worship. Every week we must bring a fresh batch of worship into the Temple and offer it up to the Lord. The worship we offer up fills the Temple from the top to the bottom and it covers up the smell of our sins enough so that God can enter the room with us. But if we try to reuse the worship from last week, the Lord cannot come near us; our sins have filled the room with an odor. But if we enter this place with praise, then that will fill the room with something sweet.

Just like when Disney fills the street with the smell of vanilla in order to draw you into their restaurant, our praise fills the room with a sweet odor and draws God into our presence. We don't enter the presence of the Lord; the Lord enters our presence only when we have prepared ourselves and the place to draw him in.

Psalm 22:3 (KJV) But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Do you feel like you are alone? Worship the Lord; draw Him into your presence. Are you being attacked and need assistance? Worship the Lord.

Perfect Sacrifice

Another aspect of the showbread that I want to point out to you: nowhere in the scripture does it say that the showbread had to be perfect. Other things in the Temple service had to be perfect. In fact, the phrase "without blemish" appears in the Bible 41 times and all of them are about sacrifices that can be presented in the Temple to the Lord. Lamb, sheep, goats, and heifers must all be perfect specimens before they are acceptable as a sacrifice to the Lord.

But the showbread never uses the phrase, "without blemish." The showbread isn't even used in the Temple service. It sits in the Temple on a special table until the next Sabbath where it is taken away and replaced. Why? Because the perfection of the showbread comes from its smell, not from its look. The showbread doesn't have to look good, so long as it smells good. The showbread can be broken, too light, too dark, lopsided, or any number of other defects; but if it smells good, then it is acceptable.

I once read an interview with a famous TV chef. In that interview the reporter asked the chef, "Have you ever had a meal that you just couldn't get together? No matter what you tried, the sauce wouldn't set up or the gravy was lumpy?" "Sure, it happens all the time," replied the chef. Surprised, the reporter asked, "Well how do you fix it? What advice can you give our readers on how to fix a meal when it just won't come together?" "That's easy," replied the chef, "just add more butter."

I once told my wife that story while my kids were in the room. A few weeks later my daughter decided to make my wife breakfast. My daughter made pancakes. They did not look perfect; they were a little too dark and most of them only approximated the shape of a circle, but as my wife was eating them she remarked to my daughter, "Wow these pancakes are delicious! They are probably the best I have ever had. How did you do it?" To which my daughter replied, "It was easy: I poured a stick of melted butter on each one."

How many of you have ever refused a broken waffle? Not many people will refuse a waffle that has been mangled while trying to remove it from the waffle iron. The waffle can be broken into many pieces or a little too dark, but if it smells good then you can eat it. As a cook, you should always take the broken waffle and put it before your guest while it is still hot and smells delicious before you ask, "Do you want this one or should I make another?" Someone who might refuse a cold waffle that looks funny will most likely accept a waffle that looks funny, but smells delicious.

In the same way, each of us are a broken waffle; we come to the Lord imperfectly. Each of us are broken. Each of us have been mangled physically or emotionally. We are all lopsided and inside out. We all bring the broken waffle that is our life and we are afraid to lay it on the altar before the Lord because all we see are the imperfections. But if we first surround ourselves with the sweet smell of praise and allow that aroma to permeate everything around us, then not even the Lord can refuse a life that looks funny but smells delicious.

Broken Waffle

At the story of the last supper; the final Passover meal that Jesus shared on earth, we can see the symbolism in the Old Testament come to life. We see the bitter

herbs that represent the tears that Jesus shed for us in the Garden of Gethsemane. We see that Jesus is the spotless lamb without blemish that is sacrificed to take away the sins of the people. But then we also see another aspect of Jesus:

Mark 14:22 (KJV) And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

Jesus is not only the lamb, but he is also the bread. Jesus takes the perfect piece of bread, breaks it into pieces, and then says, "This is my body." Jesus' body was stabbed, beaten, and nailed to a cross, but not one of his bones is ever broken. It even fulfills a prophecy about Jesus that none of His bones is ever broken.

Psalms 34:20 (KJV) He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

Why then does he say that the broken bread is his body? Perhaps because we are the broken bread. We are the broken waffles. When Jesus made himself into a broken waffle like we, then he has no reason to not be in our presence.

You may feel like your life is broken. You may feel like you are not good enough. You may feel like you are a broken waffle; someone who has been torn apart, mangled, and overcooked. But all you need is, like the showbread, to smell good. All you need to do is surround yourself with the sweet aroma of praise and the Lord will accept you as you are. No one ever refuses a broken waffle; the Lord will not refuse you. All it takes is the sweet smell of praise.

Well, that and more butter.