

CHRISTMAS IS THE START OF GATHERING BROKEN PIECES

John 3:16

(This message is not original with me. I discovered this beautiful message in 1987 and have read it every Christmas since to my Church family.)

The Duke of Norfolk once sent the King of England a priceless treasure as an expression of his love and esteem.

It was a Portland Vase, a rare antique. Because he wanted to share his treasure with the nation, the King had the vase placed in the British Museum.

At a later date, so the story goes, came disaster. It began in the Duke's own home. His chief servant, puffed up with pride, began to plot to overthrow the Duke. He was caught and dismissed from service.

Eaten up with hatred, the servant vowed to get even with the Duke. His bitter mind brooded on a scheme that he knew would bring personal distress to the Duke and his household, a scheme centering on the Portland Vase.

The servant packed his goods and left for London. He went to the British Museum to find the exact location of the Portland Vase. While unobserved, he worked out his plan of action.

Eventually, visitors left that area of the museum and attendants were out of sight. Quickly and quietly he climbed over the barrier. At last his moment of revenge had come. Hatred blinded him to caution. A quick check showed that nobody was in sight. With both hands he grasped the beautiful masterpiece and raised it high above his head. Then with all his might he sent it crashing to the floor. His evil work was done.

The crash echoing through the corridors of the museum quickly brought attendants to the scene. Too late! The priceless Portland Vase was smashed into a thousand pieces. Shocked and grieved, the attendants swept up the shattered pieces. The antique was broken beyond repair - or so it seemed.

"Save every piece," the King said when hearing of the tragedy. "This is my most important and treasured gift. We'll search for a man who can repair it, no matter what it costs."

So a search for a craftsman to repair the precious masterpiece began all over the land. For a long time it proved fruitless, the task impossible. But, at last, in the far north of Scotland, a man was found who could do the work. He was a distant relative of the original creator of the Portland Vase.

He came to London and for months he labored. Working with great skill and endless patience, he picked up each broken fragment, found its place in the original piece, and delicately fixed it back where it belonged.

You may see the Portland Vase in the British Museum today, it is said, very, very faintly marked by restoration. Though this story is reputed to be true, I cannot vouch for its authenticity. However, as a parable it offers a powerful illustration of the story of Man's fall, and God's great love in giving His Son Jesus Christ, to rescue lost mankind.

Biblical accounts tell of an angel who lived in Heaven. Second to God, he was brilliant, beautiful and majestic and was the chief musician in Heaven. His name was Lucifer, son of the morning.

He also had a problem with pride. Wanting to overthrow God, Lucifer said, "***I will ascend into Heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the North; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.***" (Isaiah 14)

Lucifer, or Satan, changed from an angelic being into the Devil, the father of lies and evil. He wanted to be God. But his pride was his downfall.

"How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cast down to the ground...you shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." Wrote *Isaiah (14:12, 15)*

Anger, hostility and aggression are often expressions of fear, guilt or jealousy, and so with Satan. Hatred possessed this fallen angel's being. He determined to get even with God so he turned to God's most precious creation - Man, God's Family.

Diabolically he plotted to entice man into pride and sin, so that he, too would fall from glory. By destroying man, he would even the score with God.

In His love, God gave man free will either to love Him or not to love Him, to choose good or evil. Satan twisted God's gift of free will, telling man that if he disobeyed God, he would not die but become like God, knowing both good and evil (*Genesis 3:4-5*). He did not tell him that disobedience would bring alienation from God and enslavement to evil and death.

Satan deceived man. He lifted him high as it were, and in a flash of Satanic revenge, sent him crashing to destruction. Satan's evil work was done. Sin entered the world, God's world. Man was eternally severed from God, or so Satan believed.

God could have thrown away the pieces of broken humanity and started again, but He didn't. His love for man was far too great. His priceless treasure must be redeemed.

Instead of having to search the heavens for just the right one to redeem His priceless treasure, God chose His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Only through Him could the Father's heart be satisfied. Only He could express the divine love and go to the uttermost lengths to reclaim lost mankind.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..." (*John 3:16*)

So, at Christmas, over 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the One who created all things, the One who with His mighty power flung the stars, the planets and the galaxies across the heavens to the farthest ends of the universe, the One who created the tiniest atom and the largest sun and man with his complex mind and spirit, laid aside His glory to become a man Himself. He came on a rescue mission from Heaven to earth to make each person whole again, to put the Father's family back together again.

Down the hot, dusty streets of Jerusalem, the Son of God searched out the broken pieces. On the shores of Galilee, by a well in Samaria, in villages and at market places, always He searched. That's why Christ came to earth ***"...to seek and to save that which was lost..."*** (*Luke 19:10*)

When Christ healed blind Bartimaeus, He was lovingly picking up a broken piece of His creation and gently placing him back into God's master design, and there are many others, a leper, a harlot, a despised tax gatherer, children, religious people, rich people, and poor people, all were part of lost mankind, all were of infinite value to God.

When God found me and when He found YOU, another piece of broken humanity, He also picked us up, forgave us our sins and placed us back into His great plan.

Today, Christ the Savior is still seeking the lost and calling to man and women, boys and girls everywhere to be forgiven and made whole.

***"Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."
"...and whosoever will may come..."*** (*Matthew 11:28 Revelation 22:17*)

Christ's invitation is also to YOU. He is calling you to come to Him and find forgiveness and wholeness. How can you come? Very simply. By confessing your sin to Him, accepting His forgiveness, and asking Him into your life as Lord and Savior. In so praying, Christ will come into your life and place you back into His great plan for mankind. He will give you a new heart.

When all of God's pieces have been found and put back then God will send His Son to bring His most prized possession (the Church) home to Heaven.