

Wabi-sabi
By Rev Todd Farnsworth
2 Corinthians 4: 1-10



*Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. **2** Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. **3** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **4** The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **5** For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"[a] made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. **7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. **8** We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; **9** persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. **10** We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

Like many of you, I'm feeling a bit raw this morning. Despite a great vacation filled with kittens and playing with folks who love cats and kittens (Martha and I helped run a convention for Kitten Academy); even though we held tiny balls of fur and love in our hands and then returned home to

our own fluff balls of snuggle, world events broke through the kitty cutonium and fried our circuits. While we were away we witnessed the plan to destroy our democracy unfold in the special hearings, as members of our government's executive and legislative branches conspired to overthrow an election. We witnessed the judicial branch of our political system deliver a blow to gun control by issuing a blanket declaration of open carry, and a shattering of rights for women around our nation with the overturning of Roe v Wade. We heard threats to other rights invoked by Supreme Court justices who mused out loud about reconsidering marriage between people who are of the same gender, access to contraception, and intimacy between same-sex individuals. Having opened the door to dismissing the past, they seemed to feel emboldened to go further. Perhaps it was this same gateway that elicited from a standing Senator the idea that perhaps marriage between people of different races should be examined and segregation be reestablished.

That's a lot of brokenness for one week and I confess, I need a little help in dealing with it. Maybe you do, too. Fortunately, we are not alone. We are a church. A body of Christ. Together, we can offer support to one another and our neighbors most deeply affected by this mess, in these trying times.

WE, are also a church that reads a bit of Louise Penney (amen!), and I don't want to confuse her with Jesus, but she is a source of light in the darkness, and as I was wrestling with all that has happened while I was away, I remembered her character Inspector Gamache. In How the Light Gets In the main character is described as, "*Armand Gamache had always held unfashionable beliefs. He believed the light would banish the shadows. That kindness was more powerful than cruelty, and that*

goodness existed, even in the most desperate places. He believed that evil had its limits." I believe it's in this book that Inspector Gamache talks about brokenness and light and a Japanese practice called Kintsugi. Kintsugi is the art of repairing pottery with gold or silver, in a way that the lines of brokenness remain visible. There is a picture of kintsugi on your bulletin.

Kintsugi is part of a broader philosophy called wabi-sabi. Fortunately, for me, wabi-sabi is impossible to define exactly. In broad terms, it is an acceptance that things are not perfect and in that state of imperfection, there is still an opportunity for beauty and goodness to shine through. It's kind of like our annual Rummage Sale, where a 100 things don't go as planned, and yet at the end of the weekend, we are able to celebrate the good feeling we have of having made a difference in our community by recycling and redistributing goods, AND, earning money that will support local charities that will also go on to do good work! Wabi-Sabi! We focus on the glory in the cracks, the faults, of the moment, and that refocusing changes our spirit! It allows God's light to warm us and give us hope despite troubles with the internet in nearly new and being left with too much furniture at the end of the sale. Look at the good that was wrought in that chaos! And it's not just a good feeling. Real action happens in places that we support, in ministries that we are partners with at Neighbors Link and Hopes Door, and Open Arms for Refugees! People's lives are changed.

Paul was writing about a similar process of making lemonade from lemons. He notes that *The god (little g) of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* And yet, despite that tumult taking place, Jesus' message continues to shine! *For what we preach is not*

ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"[a] made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. Wabi-sabi!

The early church take on Wabi-Sabi directs us to look for the light shining through the brokenness of our earthly lives so that we can see/experience the knowledge of God's glory.

As we gather in the rubble this week, where do you see the light? If we look past the sadness and anger and disappointment, or joy, I invite you to share where you see:

God....beauty...truth...hope...courage...compassion...justice...

What do you see?

(The congregation noted: the courage of Liz Cheney to take part in the special committee hearings, young people gathering in protest and taking action to work around the SCOTUS ruling, family and friends who reached out to one another in concern, a caregiver who stayed by the family during a difficult time)

It may be difficult to focus on those things when we are overwhelmed by the chaos and its debris, but our faith teaches us to try. To focus. To preach Jesus' love into a world that is divided by little gods of destruction and greed and a desire for god-like power. It is in the light of God's love that we are healed and made strong. It is in the presence of God's justice that we find the courage to boldly apply Christ's teachings to difficult situations.

We are not inanimate objects without the rights to medical care and compassion. We are not drones who can be kept from loving who we love. We are not meant to live apart from our sisters, brothers, and blessed others who do not comply with a binary understanding of themselves. We are wabi-sabi. Glorious messes. Beautiful disasters. Opportunities for the God of love to shine through and be glorified! Glorified. No misguided law can diminish the Beloved Divine.

Like Gamache, I believe that evil has an end. It is not creative and eventually consumes/destroys itself.

Like Paul, I believe that God's light goes on forever. Being creative, it keeps on building, growing, and evolving toward love. Love never ends.

Hear the words Paul gave us, again, and take heart in wabi-sabi.

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. **8** We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; **9** persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. **10** We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

Despite the imperfection and squalor of this moment, there IS beauty shining through. In that beauty is the God of our faith. Let us take these broken clay jars and be moved by God's light to continue shining in the darkness, in Jesus' name. Amen.

(To read more about wabi-sabi, consider these articles)

<https://japanobjects.com/features/wabi-sabi>

[https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20181021-japans-unusual-way-to-view-t
he-world](https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20181021-japans-unusual-way-to-view-the-world)