

Knowing Me, Knowing You: Broken But Whole - 15th May 2022

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Preacher: Dave Moss

[0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to our third session in the series, Knowing Me, Knowing You. And today we're looking at a classic story from the book of Exodus, Moses and the Burning Bush, and particularly about what it means to feel broken and how God makes us whole.

Music There you go. As we've already heard, last night was Eurovision, and unsurprisingly, or surprisingly you might think, Ukraine won, thanks to the public vote.

But more surprisingly, the UK came second. That's even absolutely more surprising. So it's not without its difficulties, but actually the theme of our talks comes from another Eurovision winner, ABBA, who won back in 1974.

And actually it's not their Eurovision song, that was Waterloo, it's a later song, Knowing Me, Knowing You, that's the title of our current theme. And the observant amongst you will note that two weeks ago, the person on the right there, our vicar Bjorn from ABBA, was leading our session looking at what sort of Christian you may be.

Was it heart, head, kingdom, or contemplative? Is it Bjorn again? Bjorn again. That's a matter for debate.

[1 : 48] Okay. Right. And last week we had our curate, the lady second to the left there, Frida from ABBA, leading us in deep and serious contemplation.

So it's only right that you expect this week that perhaps you're going to hear from Benny or Agnita and get some more deep spiritual insight.

Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you. All you've got this week is the tribute act. Okay. Someone pretending to be the real thing. So I'm sorry.

That's all you've got. And all I could come up with is a quiz. That's all I've got for you. I'm sorry. And all you have to do in this quiz is just raise your hand when you think that's the answer.

It is multiple choice, so you don't need to think too hard. So simple. That's me, really. A simple tribute act. That's all you've got this morning. Okay. Not after this, you won't.

[2 : 47] Right. Okay. So what do you think the state of the world is today? So here's five questions to get you thinking. So here's the first one.

In all low-income countries across the world today, how many girls finish primary school? Do you feel it's 20%, 40%, or 60% of girls who finish primary school?

So there's no opt-outs here, okay? You've got to make a decision. So hands up if you think it's 20%. Okay. What about 40%? Not many.

And 60%. Just one. Okay. So most people feel 20%. Okay. Here's your next one. In the last 20 years, the proportion of the world population living in extreme poverty has almost doubled, remained more or less the same, or almost halved.

Okay. So almost doubled, remained more or less the same, or almost halved. Who feels that it's almost doubled, those working in extreme poverty? So okay. Remain more or less the same?

[3 : 59] No? No. Oh, one person. And almost halved. Ooh, two, three people. Okay. Thank you. Three.

There are 2 billion children in the world today, age 0 to 15 years old. How many children will there be in the year 2,100? So that's quite a while ahead.

You know, projections, according to the United Nations data. So how many children? There's 2 billion now. How many in 2,100? Is it 4 billion, 3 billion, or 2 billion?

4 billion, 3 billion, or 2 billion? Who feels it's 4 billion? A few. 3 billion? Very popular. And 2 billion.

Again, just a few. 4 or 5. Okay. Number four. The UN, United Nations, predicts that by 2,100, the world population will have increased by another 4 billion.

[4 : 54] What's the main reason? So this is not just young people. It's the whole lot. What's the main reason we'll have 4 billion more people? Is it there'll be more children? There'll be more adults? Or there'll be more very old people?

Okay. So there'll be more children, more adults, more very old people. That's over 75. Okay. So who feels there'll be more children?

One or two. What about there'll be more adults? Who thinks there'll be more very old people? Most of you. Okay. And the last one.

How many of the world's one-year-old children today have been vaccinated against some disease? How many of the one-year-old children across the world?

Is it 20%, 50% or 80%? Who feels it's 20% who've been vaccinated? Okay. 50% and 80%.

[5 : 51] Okay. That works superbly well. You all answered the wrong quick answers. It's great. Okay. Right. Here's some answers. So it's actually 60% of girls finish school, according to the World Bank.

Okay. So actually, we're doing pretty well with that. 20 years, the poverty has almost halved, not doubled. It's one of the misconceptions that we keep being told, give to charity, give to charity, give to this because people need it.

And then we assume it's not made any difference. Yeah. Actually, it's made a huge difference. And the more you give, the bigger the difference is. So actually, it's very, very encouraging if you think about it.

So it's actually almost halved. And that's really encouraging. Actually, it will remain the same. It's not going up. It's not going up. It's not going up. It's not predicted to going up.

But things like birth control and all sorts of things. And all this sort of thing is there. And it's making a difference. Again, a real, real impact. And there you are.

[7 : 00] There's all the statistics. I'm not going to go through with it. There. You can have a look online if you want to for all that. And predicts by 2100, actually, there'll be more adults. It's not the old people about the problem.

The old people have never been the problem. Okay? There'll be more adults. Largely because, obviously, we're going quite far into the future. Okay? And the vaccinations, actually, that's really encouraging.

It's actually 80%. So, very different to what you predicted. And, if you like, there's all the different vaccinations they've been getting. So, a lot and lot of different things.

Why am I doing all this? Well, I don't know how you did personally. But I think, probably, from what I'm gathering, that some of the answers did surprise you. Is that correct? Yeah? And this is because we're conditioned to think in certain ways.

It suits people to get us to think in certain ways. The media, and particularly advertisers and politicians, make it their core business to get us to think in certain ways.

[8 : 06] And when we're faced with the facts, we often don't believe them. Right? We often don't believe them. Oh, that can't be true, we say. And we can be faced with those facts time and time again.

The same facts. And we still don't believe them. Such is the success of conditioning. It's trendy to talk about false news. And that's all part and parcel of this much wider agenda for getting you to accept a particular mindset.

And if we're not careful with this, we find ourselves operating from a mindset that can shut us off from what God is asking us to do.

Right, let's start with me. I've talked to you before that I grew up on a dairy farm in Cheshire. And there's some nice photographs of our Victorian farmhouse of 22 rooms.

Not all were occupied. I listened to that. That was what was there. There's some of the farm buildings on the right. And then below you can just about see a cow, I think, and a tractor. And in the middle is the garden there.

[9 : 15] It comes, that upbringing comes with a very clear mindset, a set of beliefs and principles on which to operate. And here are some of them. Farmers work hard, especially dairy farmers, as they have cows to care for 24-7.

Milk is the most important foodstuff. It's healthy and versatile. It can be used for tea, coffee, custard, butter, cheese, and that new thing called yogurt.

Most townies think that milk comes from the supermarket and don't appreciate hard-working farmers. I was always told that.

As a farmer's son, that's me, it's your duty to work hard on the farm, doing as your father asks, and when you're old enough, find a nice farmer's daughter to marry. I failed that one.

This is so you can keep the land and business in the family. If you must go to agricultural college, be careful because new ideas can be expensive and often a waste of time.

[10 : 24] And I could go on and on and on. There are two gaffes I'm pretty well known for from this mindset. The first one was when I was at school, and I'd often say I enjoyed playing tennis, which I did.

When asked where, I would say, well, on the lawn tennis court at home. That's your middle photograph there. Not realizing how this sounded to others. That's the trouble when you go to school with townies, you see.

You see, I really only knew other farmers' children, and they all had tennis courts. So to me, that was normal. And I can't quite understand people in the town why they don't have a tennis court outside.

It's just odd to me. But there we are. The other was when I was at university, I was making custard for a shared meal with friends. And I measured out milk, a measuring jug, from a bottle.

And I poured it all in like this. And I said, wow, that's amazing. It comes to a pint exactly. Because I'd never encountered milk bottles before until that point.

[11 : 26] And that was my mindset. And this is the problem with mindset. All this was normal to me. And there's really, actually, not too much wrong with it, if I'm honest.

It contains an awful lot of truth and common sense. But what if God wants you to break out of that and think and live a bit differently? Here's a book here I would recommend to you, Rule Britannia, Brexit and the End of Empire.

And I've had a little to do with the writers of this book, Sally Tomlinson and Danny Dowling. Professor Sally Tomlinson I've been in correspondence with quite a bit and had to speak at my association's annual conference.

And I've also heard Professor Danny Dowling speak. And they examine the mindset we have as a country. And particularly the ruling class in our country.

And they unpack how they think the way they do. Sally Tomlinson, particularly, has examined how we're influenced by our education. And particularly what we're taught and how we're taught in school.

[12 : 30] She's examined lots of school textbooks and so on. And how particularly many of Boris Johnson's expression and ideas are taken, but not always understood, taken from the textbooks he uses.

And I could give you lots of examples here. That he was used at public schools. And he says things, and they're all in these textbooks. And a lot of it is quite frightening stuff, if I'm honest. When you realise how people have been taught to think.

There's this classic one of an MP criticised by the Archbishop of Canterbury about sending refugees to Rwanda. What's all the fuss about?

We're sending them to a safe European country. And, you know, you can see certain mindsets that are there. There's so much to say here. And how and why believe the things we do.

Again, there's much good in it. But we need to be careful that the way we think doesn't shut us off from God. And then we come to this, to our Christian mindset.

[13 : 32] Let me give you an example. Again, I've always been led to believe that we're in the end times. Wars, rumours of wars, all this sort of thing. And particularly up to the year 2000, that was a very, very popular mindset.

You know, that Jesus is coming to go and we won't quite make it to 2000. And so on, because of all of that. I've been very challenged by the writer and priest Richard Rohr, who suggests, actually, that we're really only in the early stages of Christianity in the world.

And our understanding of God hasn't progressed very far over the centuries. It's the thinking that God is on our side and everyone else is evil kind of thinking.

That kind of thing. It's very basic understanding. And that's quite challenged my mindset, if I'm honest. I think, actually, that does sound rather true. Our understanding of God is not particularly well advanced.

Each Christian denomination has its own particular mindset and they have clear ideas and expectations of what is to be believed, what is acceptable, and how to behave and conduct ourselves.

[14 : 43] They all believe they're right and have the best way. Again, it's not because they're wrong, because they're not. We tend to be more open-minded these days about denominations, perhaps more respectful, saying, well, if it works for them, that's fine.

Well, perhaps secretly thinking, actually, we've got it the best way. And we haven't really made much progress in that. Again, there's much to commend and very, very much to be valued.

But again, we need to be careful that the mindset doesn't shut us off from what God may be saying. So here's my first thing for you to consider.

What is your mindset? Do you recognize that you have one? And how does that mindset influence your understanding of God and the world around you?

You only need to go to somewhere out of your comfort zone, and you find yourself challenged quite quickly, don't you, with that? So what's your mindset? And how does that influence your understanding of God?

[15 : 56] Let's look at Moses. Moses is one of the great heroes, so to speak, of the Old Testament, and the subject of many a Sunday school lesson, a patriarch of the faith.

And if we're not careful, we can come to a very simplistic view of his faith journey. We're perhaps familiar with him being hidden in a basket in the bulrushes on the Nile by his mother after Pharaoh had ordered all the Hebrew babies to be killed.

He was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter and brought up as a son in Pharaoh's palace. This seems great, but the next stage certainly isn't.

As an adult, he's angered by seeing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people, and he kills the Egyptian, hides the body in the sand. The next day, he sees two Hebrews fighting and tells them off.

They turn on him and ask if he will kill one of them. He's been seen and found out. Pharaoh finds out, and he tries to kill Moses, so Moses flees to the wilderness to tend sheep.

[17 : 08] He works tending the sheep for a priest of Midian, who has got seven daughters, and, you know, in the farming community, this is a good move. He marries one of them and has children and settles down to a safe, unassuming life in the wilderness, where only the sheep really ask things from him and is safe and secure and assuming that that is his life's path.

This is Exodus 3, Moses and the burning bush, another famous story. Now, Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.

And he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.

And Moses saw that though the bush was on fire, it did not burn up. So Moses thought, I will go over and see this strange sight, why the bush does not burn up.

When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush. Moses, Moses, and Moses said, here I am.

[18 : 23] Do not come any closer, God said. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. Then he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

At this, Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. And God goes on to explain that he's seen the misery of his people and he wants Moses to go and rescue them.

But Moses said to God, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? And God said, I will be with you.

And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain. Moses said to God, suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you.

And they ask me, what is his name? Then what shall I tell them? God said to Moses, I am who I am.

[19 : 31] This is what you are to say to the Israelites. I am has sent me to you. God also said to Moses, say to the Israelites, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has sent me to you.

This is my name forever. The name you shall call me from generation to generation. This isn't some Eurovision voting system.

Bonsoir, ici Paris. Guten Abend, von Berlin. Good evening, Stockholm calling. What a fab show this evening. Hello, God is calling. This isn't a fab light show with a burning bush and a dance routine without sandals.

It's not that. Moses is damaged goods. He's got a loser mindset. He's out doing his farm a bit as good shepherds do.

The heat of the desert would mean a burning bush was not that unusual. But this one is as it doesn't burn up. And it would have been quite dangerous for him to just, you know, leave his attention off the sheep and look aside.

[20 : 44] But turning aside he does. And turning aside involves curiosity and a willingness to take time to explore. What's going on here? What's going on here? And God grabs Moses' attention when he is in his usual setting with something unusual.

Please note that. God grabs Moses' attention when he is in his usual setting with something unusual. Fire is a symbol of purity and of revelation of God himself.

And here he is. Here God is. On holy ground. Coming before God requires preparation.

He's standing on familiar earth. But now aware of God's presence there. Take off your sandals. A practice to show you're in God's presence.

God transforms a place of desolation into a holy place. A place to meet God. He transforms where Moses is into this holy place.

[21 : 55] A place he can meet with God. There was nothing special about this place. Yet God makes the ordinary special. Makes it holy. Makes it a place of encounter.

So often it is the places where we are in day in, day out. That that's when God calls us. Are we aware of that?

Aware of his presence in our day to day? Holy is when we realize that God is there after all. He's never been anywhere else.

But now we realize it. If you struggle with this, please ask. Ask God or ask others to help you if you find that difficult.

But God is there whether we realize it or not. I am who I am. I am that I am is God's name.

[22 : 56] How he wishes to be known. The verb here can be past, present, or future. Because God is always the same.

God is active. Always loving his people. He never forgot about them. Moses learns God's name. Encounters who he is.

And he's called to follow God in a new stage in his life. And he's no spring chicken at this stage either. You know, he's got really comfy where he is. And he's now called on to move to a new stage.

Moses is asked to abandon his normal ways. Let go of his mindset of how God works. Who God uses. And where God leads.

Because after all, who knows Pharaoh's court like Moses? Nobody. Who else knows how to live in the wilderness? Well, Moses.

[23 : 56] All things that are going to come in later on. And no matter what Moses, as the story goes on, comes up with as an excuse, God calls Moses to work with him.

Step out of your comfort zone. Let go of what you think is right. And walk with me as one. Walk with me, the I am. That's what God's calling us to do.

To walk with him as one. To walk with the I am. God is generous, self-giving, overflowing love, meeting others where they are.

That's our God. This is the quiet confidence that God of the burning bush, the God of the cross, has triumphed over. And all that can go wrong in life and will at last be put to right.

This is the way of the cross. It's also, when followed, a new burning bush for surprised desert wanderers. So if you feel you're wandering, just look.

[25 : 03] So consider this. Do you think God is able to get your attention? Do you ever stand on holy ground?

Do you think that God is able to get your attention in the way you are now? And do you ever stand on holy ground? Here are some thoughts from a book, *Humbler Faith, Bigger God*, written by Sam Wells.

And you're perhaps familiar with Jesus saying, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And the I am sayings in John's Gospels clearly pick on the I am of God's name.

Jesus is making the most bold statements. Sam Wells in his book argues that we've spent far too long emphasizing that Jesus says I am the way while neglecting the other two we've been far too concerned promoting Jesus as the way to heaven that we neglect other parts of the saying Jesus talks a lot about truth and the claim that I am the truth requires a much better understanding than we have at present and by doing that we have a poor understanding as a consequence of the life the life is simply living in that truth so that we have an unambiguous uninhibited unconstrained relationship with God ourselves one another and the whole of creation we're only just beginning to get to grips that we need to have a relationship with creation aren't we we're really only beginning on some of this stuff there's a lot in there have you heard about kintsugi it's a Japanese art where they take broken pottery and put it back together again using lacquer dusted with gold and silver powder to make a unique piece of art with intricate patterns only the brokenness creates it's a reminder that our imperfections mishaps and tragedies shape us and make us who we are this is what God does he removes us from our mindset brings us onto holy ground and creates beauty out of so many broken pieces so can you identify the broken pieces that fill up your life don't run away from them just identify them just identify them and that's what God does and we think of Moses as the hero but that's a broken life isn't it put back together again and that is what God does I'm really going to repeat he removes us from our mindset he brings us to holy ground and creates beauty out of so many broken pieces so can you identify the broken pieces that fill up your life don't run away from them just identify them and ask God how may God make you whole once again how may God make you whole once again

I like to play a song as a point of reflection when I finish I look for a song with a fire motif in it and as you can imagine they're not easy to find but I got one and you'll see that throughout the fire molds together the cracks in this song that filled with gold it's called beauty in your brokenness and it's a song from the band Wildwood Kin they're based in Devon they're two sisters Emily and Bethan and their cousin Megan as you can see for the thanks Dave we have spoken and if you want to know more about that you better come and ask me but there you are it's a style of music which finds them playing at festivals as well as in pubs and in churches they say it's their Christian background which informs what they sing so here it is beauty in your brokenness you feel like you'll never be enough you're trying so hard to walk the line maybe you just need to realize the decisions that you make it's okay to make mistakes when you let go you'll see it differently as you break hold break it recklessly my faults are molding shape you're making me

[29 : 53] I know you'll find there's beauty in your brokenness you'll soon be so much more than this and I know you'll find it's a perfect design in the time of the real life there's beauty in your brokenness you deserve more than you settle for you've given it one too many times don't you see it's pointless to be keeping score through it all you've come this far it's made you who you are before you go look back at where you've been when you fell down you did it beautifully your faults will mold you making shapes unseen

I know you'll find there's beauty in your brokenness you've been hiding you've been hiding
I'm on your side you see me so much more than this and I know you'll find it's a perfect
design in the time of the real life there's beauty in your brokenness you.

I know you'll find beauty I know you'll find I know you'll find I know you'll find And I know
you'll find This beauty in your broken days You'll see me so much more than this And I
know you'll find It's a perfect design It's a perfect design There's beauty in your broken
days Let's pray

God of the burning bush Lord of the cross Remove us from our mindset Bring us to holy
ground And create beauty Out of so many broken pieces Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen
Amen Amen Amen