



This picture from a Facebook post this week reveals a truth we often hide: “How are you?” “Fine,” we answer, because that’s the “right answer,” “the expected answer,” the “safe answer.” “How are you?” “Fine.” But lurking beneath the surface of our polished presentation which exudes the poise of a person prepared to prevail over any and every possibility, other answers long to come to the surface, other words yearn to be heard: “How am I?” “I am ashamed.” “I am broken.” “I am sorry.” “I am wounded.” “I am unworthy.”

We have our struggles, and in those dark times, we comfort ourselves with the hope that “one day this will all make sense. One day we will understand why we’re going through what we’re going through. God has a plan, and one day that mystery will become clear.” We might even say it will be a revelation.

That day is described in Revelation 5. Following John’s letters to the 7 churches, John is lifted up into the throne room of God. There are angels as far as the eye can see; myriads upon myriads, more angels than John can count. Living creatures and elders sing and praise and worship; the moment is at hand; the scroll is ready to be opened; the scroll that contains God’s plan; all the questions answered; all our

“why’s,” and “when’s,” and “how long, O Lord, how long’s,” finally spoken to and satisfied.

The moment is at hand, but who is worthy to open the scroll? Knowledge is power, and the knowledge contained in that scroll has the power to change everything; on the one hand, that is very good news because there is so much we long to see change in ourselves and in our world; but on the other hand, change has a way of getting out of control. It doesn’t respect our comfort zone. It doesn’t honor our boundaries; it pushes us farther than we’re willing to go.

That’s a lot of power. Who is worthy to wield it? Who has the right to define reality and determine what it means? Who deserves to chart the course of the cosmos?

The powers-that-be are always willing to give it a try, because if they can shape the way we make sense of our lives, they can control us; their knowledge gives them power over us. From time to time, we encounter someone who is quite willing to “tell it like it is.” They let us know what we need to know, and in so doing, they exercise power over us. Power over us is very different from power for us; as Pete Townsend put it, “Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.”

We “won’t get fooled again.” So there is a certain self-preserving wisdom in our answer, “How are you?” “Fine;” which is really another way of saying, “I’m playing it safe.”

We play it safe, but we long to be saved. We long for that scroll to be opened. We long for someone who is worthy to wield that kind of power; someone who will not hold it over us, but will instead exercise power in a way that empowers us, so that we can truly be “fine.”

The moment is at hand, and the answer isn’t what we expect: *Revelation 5:12 (NRSV) singing with full voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”*

In the midst of heaven’s splendor, seated next to the throne of God, surrounded by myriads of angels, with glory and majesty and power all around, is the Lamb that was slaughtered; the crucified Christ; the one who was despised and rejected of men; the one who wasn’t “fine.”

The Lamb is worthy, not despite his brokenness, but because of it. The hands that receive the scroll and break the 7 seals bear the scars of a man who’s been crucified. He will bear those marks for all eternity and it is his suffering that makes him worthy *“to receive power and wealth and wisdom and honor and glory and blessing.”*

The Lamb’s worth isn’t defined in terms of merit; it’s a matter of mercy; it’s not about getting it right; it’s about receiving redemption.

This revelation invites us to see our own suffering and woundedness in a different way; it invites us to believe that our brokenness, our woundedness, all that makes us not “fine” has been redeemed. There is a purpose to our pain. That purpose is written on that scroll, which the Lamb of God alone is worthy to open, because he wasn’t “fine.” He was slain.

One of my favorite writers spoke eloquently about this. His name was Brennan Manning. He was a priest, a poet, and a recovering alcoholic. I commend his writings to you, and offer you these samples from a man whose faith is now sight:

"To be alive is to be broken; to be broken is to stand in need of grace. It is only through grace that any of us could dare to hope that we could become more like Christ." [Brennan Manning](#)

“Suffering, failure, loneliness, sorrow, discouragement, and death will be part of your journey, but the Kingdom of God will conquer all these horrors. No evil can resist grace forever.” Brennan Manning

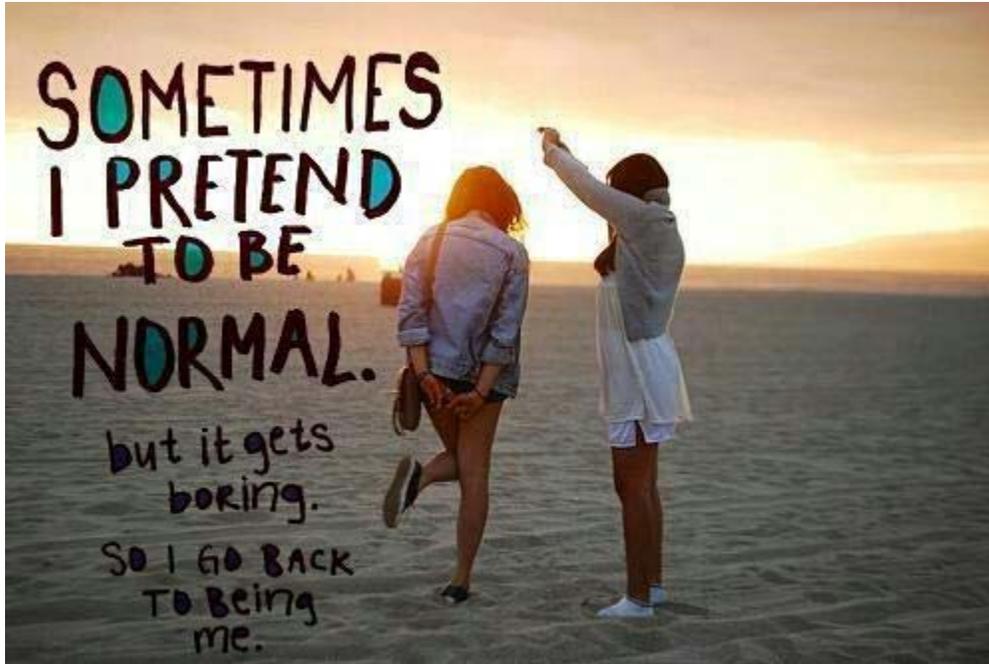
A poem by Leonard Cohen says it well:

Ring the bells that still can ring.

Forget your perfect offering.

There is a crack in everything.

That’s how the light gets in.¹



So, how are you? "To be alive is to be broken; to be broken is to stand in need of grace." On this side of heaven, we live with many questions; we live in the hope that one day there will be an answer; until that day, don't be ashamed of your brokenness; don't hide behind false words and fake smiles. Give it to God. You don't have to measure up to someone else's standard. The Lamb of God is the one who sets the standard; the Lamb who was slain; the Lamb who embraced your pain and my pain and has the scars to show for it. The Lamb sets the standard, so cherish who you are and join the worship of heaven "singing with full voice: Worthy is the Lamb!" Amen!

¹ <http://www.philipyancey.com/archives/2645> April 13, 2013.