

Shattered Dreams

The Larger Story – Part 1

April 4, 2021

DAY 1: The shock of shattered dreams

Proverbs 16:9 In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.

1. How are you to understand when your spouse has an affair? When you are served divorce papers? When one of your kids becomes involved in opioids? When you are laid off for a long time? When the doctor utters the “C” word?

2. There are three realities of life that are important to understand, or you will have a very difficult time understanding life or God when suffering descends on you.

→ **God wants to bless us. Ultimate joy is God’s target for us.**

→ **The highest dream we can dream is to know and reflect God to others. The problem is we have no idea that that dream is in the deepest parts of our hearts.**

→ **Our shattered dreams are never random. They are small pieces of a very big puzzle that God is putting together in our lives. The picture of the big puzzle is joy.**

3. The disciples and a handful of women had a shattered dream when Jesus died by crucifixion. Though Jesus had told them on at least seven occasions over three plus years that this would occur, it never really “sank in.”

4. Jesus was buried in a rock tomb, guarded by sixteen Roman soldiers. Let’s see how shattered dreams unfold.

John 20:1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

5. What did Mary expect to see when she visited the tomb?

6. When she did not see the body what conclusion did she draw? She thought she was correct.

7. When shattered dreams occur, and then it gets worse we say, “when it rains, it pours.” Or, “the other shoe just fell.”

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: The confusion of shattered dreams.

1. God loves us more than we imagine. He desires us to be part of His family as beloved children. He is like an exceptional parent that gives us what is good *whether or not we think it's good*.

2. We have *our* ideas about what a good God should do. It can be opening a parking spot, getting us out of debt, career success or having our kid clean from opioids. But it's *our* ideas that distort understanding of what goodness actually is. Kids think ice cream is good while cauliflower is obviously bad.

3. But our problem about goodness is deeper than that. (1) We ***insist*** on *feeling immediately* better and (2) ***dislike*** what is actually good for us. We are out of touch with what would bring us the most joy. Think of heavenly ice cream with the nutritional value of cauliflower.

4. Let's pick up our story.

John 20:3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

5. Peter and John were the “lead disciples” informally. They heard Mary's statement that the gardener had taken the body of Jesus.

6. What do you think they expected to see when they ran to the tomb?

7. What did they actually see at the tomb? (Put on your detective hat).

8. John records that he “believed.” He then adds that none of them yet understood that Jesus would rise from the dead.

9. Shattered dreams throw us into great confusion. Our minds race with competing thoughts, doubts, disbelief, conflict, shame, and questions of why.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: The grief of shattered dreams.

1. Shattered dreams turn on the spicket of grief. A flood of tears becomes our everyday experience. Sometimes it seems as if our tears will never stop.

John 20:11a Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, ...

2. Sometimes shattered dreams center around a *relational* loss. The obvious ones involve the death of a loved one. But sometimes, a shattered dream of the loss of a career, a business, or a job also involves a relational element to it. When we have to move away from friends, a church we love, business colleagues, great neighbors, etc., we will also grieve relational loss and separation.

John 20:11b ... she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ *They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"*

3. When dreams shatter we have questions for God. When dreams shatter God has questions for us, some of which make no immediate sense to us.

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

5. This is the moment where the Larger Story of God meets our smaller stories!

¹⁴ *At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

6. Some ask, if she looked at Jesus why didn't she recognize him? Remember, she had been grieving, weeping, was distraught because the body of Jesus had apparently been taken, and most importantly she did not expect to see Him alive. She likely had her head bowed on her chest, in her grief. Nobody likes to make eye contact when they're weeping. There's one more obvious reason which John underscores.

¹⁵ *He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."*

¹⁶ *Jesus said to her, "Mary."*

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

7. Most of the time shattered dreams don't remedy themselves the way they do on a thirty-minute sitcom. But God will make known two things in the midst of shattered dreams—(1) We will eventually realize that He is our real treasure, and (2) He will carry us through our shattered dream.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: The hope of shattered dreams.

1. Jesus gives Mary some important instructions.

John 20:17 Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

2. I suspect that all the questions Mary and the disciples had started with the word “Why.” Jesus answered none of those questions, here. Instead He is focused on the “What.”

3. What is the central message Jesus gives Mary to tell the disciples? What is the significance of that message?

4. Instead of answering our questions, God is intent on giving us hope—the Larger Story continues on, and your part in your smaller story is not over. God will be true to His promises.

It is hope in God’s Larger Story and in His goodness
that enables us to walk through the grief of
shattered dreams in our smaller story.

John 20:19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

5. Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you!” What was it that brought them peace?

²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

6. Jesus again says “Peace be with you!” but with very different purposes. What is the correlation between the “peace” they may enjoy and His message in verses 21-23?

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: The necessity of shattered dreams.

1. When shattered dreams strike what gets exposed down in our hearts is our stubborn commitment to demanding *how we must experience joy*. We are idol-making machines. Early in life our hearts “define” and “decide” what “life” is, what we think we need in order to be happy.
2. When our idols fail us, when dreams shatter we *feel* shattered. We feel like Humpty Dumpty in the old nursery rhyme: “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again.”
3. Thomas, known as “doubting Thomas” was no different. When Jesus died Thomas’ dreams shattered. What were those dreams? We don’t know, but it’s likely that he had dreams of a bright future under King Jesus. Whatever government Jesus built Thomas was sure to have a high position of authority and prestige. But with the death of Jesus those dreams shattered.
4. When dreams shatter we become terribly cynical of almost everything—God, joy, God’s “plan,” and His love for us. We inwardly burn with resentment for God allowing our dreams to shatter. Such is the state of Thomas in this next episode.

John 20:24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

5. Our hearts significantly harden when our dreams shatter.

John 20:26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

6. What good attitudes do you sense in Jesus? What bad attitudes are missing from Jesus?

7. What happens inside Thomas through this conversation?

8. Look at the three shattered dream principles we looked at on DAY 1.

→ God wants to bless us. Ultimate joy is God’s target for us.

→ The highest dream we can dream is to know and reflect God to others. The problem is we have no idea that that dream is in the deepest parts of our hearts.

→ Our shattered dreams are never random. They are small pieces of a very big puzzle that God is putting together in our lives. The picture “on the box” of the Larger Story puzzle is joy.

9. What strikes you about shattered dreams from this week’s devotionals?