The Golden Seams of Grace

A Good Friday All-Age Talk

Props Needed:

A complete, beautiful, whole ceramic bowl.

A duplicate bowl inside a box, plus a hammer to break it safely.

A beautifully prepared Kintsugi bowl with bright, thick, catching gold seams.

Alternative: The props could be represented by images on a slide deck, avoiding any danger of broken shards of pottery in the room! The images shown here are examples of what could be used.

The Creation & The Fall

Today is Friday, but across the world, Christians call it Good Friday. It's a bit of a strange name, isn't it? If you ask a child what makes a day "good," they might say a birthday party, a sunny day at the park, or maybe going to McDonald's for lunch. What would you say?

> *[Allow a minute or two for people to exchange ideas, and then hear a few, and briefly comment…]*

Those all sound like good days. Did you notice how no one said a public execution? Well, of course not! And yet, perhaps oddly, that is what occurred on the first Good Friday: our Lord Jesus died, nailed to a rugged wooden cross in perhaps one of the most brutal forms of execution devised.

How can a day so heavy and sad, one marked by a tragic death, be called "good"?

To understand that mystery, we have to look past the cross for a moment, and travel all the way back to the very beginning of the story. Look at this.

[Hold up the clean, whole ceramic bowl]

Long ago, God created the world and everything in it. He made humankind to be like this bowl. Look at it. It is beautiful, it is whole; it is perfectly designed, and perfectly made. But a bowl isn't just meant to be looked at on a shelf; it is made for a purpose. A bowl is designed to hold things—to hold nourishing food, clean water, or sweet wine to be shared at a table. We were designed for purpose too. God created us in his very image to be vessels, designed to be filled to the brim with his love, his joy, and his peace, and then to pour that love out into the world.

At first, everything was as designed, and humankind lived in harmony with God. But then, something went wrong. We started to wander away from the Craftsman who made us. Instead of being filled with God's love, we wanted more: more knowledge, more possessions, more power. We started to choose selfishness and greed, we hurt one another, we grew proud, and we tried to run things our own way, seeking to worship ourselves through false or foreign gods of our own making. We decided we didn't need the Craftsman's hands anymore.

And when a fragile vessel is separated from the safety of the Craftsman's hands…

...things get broken.

[Carefully drop the bowl, or strike it with a hammer]

That is what happened to our world, and that is what happens to our hearts. We became cracked, chipped, and shattered by what the Bible calls sin. What is sin? It isn't just being naughty, refusing to do your homework or not going to bed on time. Sin is something bigger. It is a messy room never tidied, a broken promise, a lie told, a back turned; it is scoffing, mockery or disdain. Sin is shattered trust.

When a bowl is shattered, it loses its purpose. It can no longer hold what it was made to hold. It leaks. And worse than that, its broken edges become sharp. Instead of pouring out love, our brokenness ends up cutting and hurting the people around us. It is clear that a broken bowl can’t mend itself. The deep tragedy of human history is that neither can we.

The Hope of Recovery

God didn't abandon us in the ruins of our brokenness. Throughout history, God sent prophets, leaders, and teachers to call us back. They brought holy laws and good advice. They preached on the streets, on rooftops and in market places, with words and with props, sometimes creating theatre to get our attention. They held up signs and they spoke truth to power at great risk to themselves, such was their conviction that humankind needed to be saved.

But a broken bowl can’t mend itself even if given a manual on how to be a bowl. No matter how hard we tried, no matter how many rules we tried to follow, our broken pieces stayed scattered on the floor. We were stuck in our brokenness, far away from God, and we didn't know how to get home.

So, God did something extraordinary. He didn't just stand at a safe distance and shout instructions from far away. He came down right into the mess.

Jesus arrived in human history, showing us for the very first time what a perfect, unbroken human life actually looked like. He showed us a heart that didn't leak, a life that was perfectly whole, and he taught us how to love with a purity we had never seen.

Think about when a child accidentally spills a full glass of milk on the kitchen floor. A loving parent doesn’t just stand across the room or at the top of the stairs shouting

angry instructions down at the frightened child. They don't just say, "Clean that up right now!"

No, a truly loving parent comes right over to the spill. They get down on their knees on the hard floor, right into the middle of the puddle, right next to the child, entering what at that moment is the child's whole, overwhelming world. And they lovingly help the child to clean up the mess, comforting them and saying, "It's okay. We are in this together."

This is God's way: to come right down into the mess of our world to be with us in our mistakes, to encourage us to behave differently. Jesus came to bring us hope, to show us a new way to live.

The Struggle to Mend

People tried, but our broken world couldn't handle the kind of perfect love Jesus was demonstrating. His wholeness and beauty exposed our cracks still further, and humanity reacted with fear and anger. It became clear that just having a good example wasn't enough. If Jesus was only a teacher showing us how to be unbroken, we would still be trapped, because we didn't have the power to fix ourselves. Something more was needed.

Observing the profound brokenness we had created, Jesus did something so counter-intuitive that it defies human logic: he let himself be broken too.

On the cross, Jesus didn't just suffer physical pain; he took onto himself the consequences of all our mistakes, our systemic selfishness, our deep-seated pride, and our agonising pain. He allowed the hammer of the world's brokenness to strike him.

This was not dramatic showmanship to get our attention. Jesus did this to be like us, to truly be one of us: wholly human. He did it because he is the Master Craftsman, and a true artist is willing to pour their very best into what they love. He knew that

the only way to mend us was to pour his own precious life into our cracks. This is an extraordinary act of love, one that can only really be understood through metaphor.

The New Creation

[Pick up a few of the raw, broken ceramic pieces]

When something beautiful gets shattered like this in our everyday lives, our natural human instinct is to sweep it up quickly, put it in a bag, and throw it straight into the bin. We think it's worthless, ruined, and beyond saving. In this way we try to hide our own brokenness from others because we are ashamed of our cracks, our faults, our sins.

But the Master Craftsman doesn’t look at our broken pieces and give up on us. He loves us too much to throw us away. Instead, he uses a method that changes absolutely everything.

[Reveal the Kintsugi bowl]

In Japan, there is a beautiful, ancient art form called Kintsugi. When a precious piece of pottery breaks, the Kintsugi artist doesn't use clear, invisible superglue to hide the fractures and pretend the accident never happened. Instead, they do something counterintuitive: they highlight the brokenness, shine it out for all to see. The Kintsugi artist takes a sap-based lacquer and mixes it with real, powdered, precious gold. They painstakingly paint this gold lacquer right into the cracks, binding the shattered pieces back together, forming something altogether new, and altogether beautiful.

Look at this bowl now. The cracks aren't hidden. They are highlighted in bright, shining gold. The bowl isn't ruined; in fact, it is arguably more beautiful, far more valuable, and entirely more precious now than it was before it was ever broken. Its history of brokenness hasn't been erased; it has been redeemed.

Today we have a whole world of Kintsugi individuals. We call ourselves Christians, and we have been mended, renewed and lifted by the sacrifice of Jesus.

This is the glorious, scandalous secret of Good Friday. Jesus let his body be broken on the cross so that his precious, golden love could be poured into the fractures of our lives.

Our God doesn't hit a cosmic rewind button, erasing our pasts and pretending we never failed, never suffered, or never made mistakes. He doesn't demand that we hide our scars. Instead, he takes our messy histories and fills them with grace.

Think about this: when Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, triumphing over the grave, he could have had a brand-new, unblemished, perfect body. Of course he could. But he didn't. He chose to keep the scars on his hands, his feet, and his side. Why? Because his wounds had become the golden seams of victory. They were the proof of how much he loved us.

When he mends our broken lives, we don't become boring, sterile museum pieces. We become living examples of his grace. We carry those same beautiful, golden reminders of his forgiveness in our characters. We are remade in his image—not hidden, not wrapped in shame, but beautifully, permanently restored to our true purpose: ready to hold his love once again.

That is why the passion of Jesus is considered a rescue mission. That is why the breaking was worth the healing. And that is why this dark, solemn Friday is so incredibly *Good*.

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Tobias Mayer, 18 June 2026

Foundations, Introduction to Christian Belief and History, Summer 2026

Assignment 1

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Word Count: ~1,100 (excluding titles and directives)