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How Your Story Becomes Sacred
in the Hands of Jesus

GLENN PACKIAM

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**How Your Story Becomes Sacred
in the Hands of Jesus**

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MULTNOMAH

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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To my wife, Holly, who is gluten-free and
tries to avoid eating bread.

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Prelude



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Glorious Bread

Is there anything more ordinary than bread? It's a building block of a meal. The French have baguettes and croissants, Chinese have steamed rolls stuffed with delicious meats, Indians have naan and chapati, Mexicans have tortillas, English have scones, and Americans have sliced white bread.

I grew up in Malaysia, where roti was my daily bread. *Roti* is technically just the Malay word for *bread*, but the word is often used to refer to a specific kind of flatbread—a more buttery and flaky version of naan, which is like a thicker, fluffier version of a tortilla. Roti can be eaten for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, and there were days when I proved it.

In my teen years—when I was completing high school via a distance-learning program with an American Christian school—I would get up in the morning, walk around the corner to the nearby restaurant, and have roti and dal (basically a lentil curry) for breakfast. And if I was hungry again at lunchtime, I'd repeat the ritual. I suspect that next to rice, roti is the food that Malaysians eat more than any other.

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For all its different names and various forms, bread is the global common meal.

It is the very commonness of bread that accounts for its appearance again and again in Scripture. It isn't bread's spectacular or unique features that contribute to its prominence. It is its ordinariness, its "mere-ness." It is *just* bread.

And that's what makes it the perfect metaphor for our lives. Because if we're honest, most of what we do is ordinary. The everyday sleeping, waking, teeth-brushing, cleaning-the-house activities are common to everyone. We all get up, go to work—paid or unpaid—tinker at our hobbies, and try to do our best. We all shuttle kids around, mow the lawn, and shop for groceries. We all try to make sure the accounts balance and the checks clear. Not much about our daily lives sets us apart from the people around us. It's just *life*. Like bread. Is there anything more ordinary?

Most of us respond to the ordinary and mundane repetitions of life in one of three ways.

Some of us resign ourselves to second-class existence—to being among the unlucky masses who lead merely ordinary lives, who participate in meaningful work only marginally, and who show up at church just to cheer on the holy and the called. We applaud influential and remarkable people, while quietly admitting that will never be *us*. There is nothing uncommon about our lives, so what's the point in trying?

Or we strive, press, and push—trying to will our best future to reality. We read books about making our lives count, discovering our purpose, and becoming the heroes of our own stories. There's an adventure we were made to live, and we're going to

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embrace it in order to leave our mark on the world. We want God to be our agent who believes in us, promotes us, and makes our dreams come true. We want the Holy Spirit to be our super-cafeinated drink that fuels our frenzied pace. Life is an uphill climb, but doggone it, we don't want to climb—we want to fly. That is, until we come crashing down in sheer exhaustion because it's all just too much.

The third approach is even more dire. Rather than settling or beating relentlessly against the wind, perhaps we see ourselves as stained and flawed, messed up and imperfect. We're not just ordinary; we're *less than that*. There have been too many failures, too many disappointments, too much pain. Others seem to shine and succeed; everything they touch turns to gold. But not us. Nothing seems to work quite right for us. We always seem to come up short. And there's a gnawing in our gut that we're trying to ignore, a voice that gets louder each day: *It's too late. I've missed my moment and missed the mark*. We can't help feeling as if our life has passed its use-by date, like stale bread.

How do you see yourself? Have you settled for a life that may not matter much? Or are you living with an unsustainable manic optimism? Are you striving and straining, grasping and grabbing for something that always feels *just* out of reach? Perhaps you're wrestling with an unkind and deeply troubling voice—the one that says that you just don't matter, that you're “less than” and “never enough.”

I have good news for you. There is more to this life than what you see. There is more to *you* than what you see. *Nothing in this world is as common as it seems*.

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Even bread is really more than bread.

In the Bible bread is not simply a dietary staple, a common food consumed daily. Bread is a picture of God's provision, the sustenance that arrives from His hand. In the wilderness it fell from the sky, providing day-to-day nourishment for the people of Israel. But even when they entered the Promised Land and began to cultivate the ground, planting and harvesting, raising crops and livestock, they were to see God and not their own effort as the source of their provision. As every mealtime Hebrew prayer reminded them, God was the giver of bread.

Bread also became a guiding metaphor for the Torah—the law of the Lord. Just as bread came from heaven to feed the Israelites in the desert, so the instructions of the Lord came to Moses on the mountain. The people were to feed on these commandments; they could not live on “bread alone” but on “every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:3). Daily manna was a metaphor for the practical guidance as they walked continually as the covenant people of God. They were to consume the scroll of the word of the Lord as one consumes bread.

Bread is also the way Jesus demonstrated compassion to the crowd hanging on His every word. He fed them, spiritually and physically. In fact, Jesus went so far as to call Himself the “Bread of Life,” the Bread that came down from heaven. This imagery reaches its fullest expression when Jesus, on the night of His death, took bread, gave thanks to the Father, and said to His disciples, “Take, eat; this is my body” (Matthew 26:26).

Bread became the way the church commemorates and remembers, experiences and encounters Jesus—Christ, the crucified, risen,

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and returning one. The sacrament of the Lord's Table is one of wine and bread.

Bread, as it turns out, is far from merely ordinary.

And so it is with our lives.

God works with the unspectacular and common, the imperfect and inadequate. That is His specialty. If God were to take the seemingly ordinary stuff of your life and fill it with His glory, He would not be working against the order of the world; He would be making your life what it was designed to be—a carrier of His glory.

FILLED WITH GLORY

Malaysia is a swirl of cultural influences, from Portuguese and Dutch hundreds of years earlier to the British only decades ago to traders from India and China. The Southeast Asian–Euro fusion shows up in food, languages, and architecture. We lived on a row of terrace houses, houses that all shared a brick wall to the left and the right and yet had iron gates at the entrance of each individual driveway. Our house had no backyard, just a patio of sorts with an outdoor kitchen to prepare fragrant Asian meals and a place to hang up laundry to dry. The patio looked down onto an alleyway that few people chose to walk through.

We had a small front garden with a papaya tree, a little red palm tree, and a variety of vibrant tropical flowers. Across the street, beyond our iron gate, there was a half-uprooted tree stump that lay almost parallel to the ground. And there was a large stone nestled near it, which seemed to be a perfect seat. The first time I

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took my place within the stump and stone, I knew it was no ordinary spot. I was sitting in a spaceship, the *Millennium Falcon*, actually. Many afternoons in my boyhood were spent flying at warp speed through the galaxy, dodging enemy fighters and rescuing fellow pilots.

The imagination of a child is one of the most powerful forces in the galaxy.

But something happens as we grow up. Tree stumps and stones become just tree stumps and stones. The world is not as magical as it once was. Things become ordinary. And the older we get, the more ordinary life seems. Where we once dreamed of changing the world, we find ourselves occupied with changing diapers and flat tires. Where our conversations used to be about the far distant future, we now plan our weekend around our yard work and errands or kids' soccer games and dance rehearsals. It's easy to think the problem is the choices we've made—we got the wrong job, the wrong house, or the wrong friends.

But it may just be that we've lost our ability to see. We no longer perceive the magic around us. The once-active imagination now sputters and stalls. The problem isn't the house or the job or the friends or our kids' activities. The problem is we've lost a *holy imagination*.

This is not how the people of God used to see the world. The Hebrew poets and prophets talked about the relationship between God and His world like this:

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,

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for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers. (Psalm 24:1–2)

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
Let your glory be over all the earth! (Psalm 57:5)

And one called to another and said:
“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:3)

The *whole earth is full of God’s glory*. God, the holy God, the God who is above and beyond everything and everyone else—*His* glory is filling not only the *heavens* but also *the earth*!

Think about that for a minute. When we speak about God’s holiness, we tend to emphasize His distance from us. To be holy is to be *different from* and completely *other than* anything else. That is true—the Hebrew notion of holiness is a kind of separateness from everything else. It is, in one sense, the very opposite of commonness. But this otherness is not all that is true of God. What Isaiah saw was something more radical than we imagined: God is holy *and* His glory fills the earth. God is not only above and beyond His creation; He is also somehow within it. God is holy, and He is filling the common with glory. The heavens are open above the earth.

Long before the prophet Isaiah penned those words, a herdsman named Jacob had a dream of the heavens opening up. He was on the run, embarrassed about his deception and afraid for his life. He had just fooled his father into blessing him instead of his brother, Esau, with a blessing reserved for firstborn sons. The blessing was a

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practice that had come to symbolize a life trajectory, a sense of destiny. And so here was Jacob, on the run with a stolen destiny, wondering what lay before him (see Genesis 28).

As Jacob lay his head down that night to what could only have been a troubled sleep, he found a stone to use as a pillow. One would not guess that these would be the conditions suitable to pleasant dreams. Yet even as a man on running for his life, as he slept he dreamt.

He saw the heavens open up and angels ascending and descending in that place. And he heard the voice of the Lord say to him, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac” (verse 13). Immediately, God identified Himself as the God who had called Jacob’s grandfather and father.

With this identification God reminded Jacob that he had not cut himself off from that lineage or that heritage. And then God spoke to him about his destiny and the promise that had been given to his family: “The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (verses 13–14). The promise was still in effect.

Then came a promise just for Jacob: “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” (verse 15). It was personal. God was not simply honoring a promise to his grandfather; God would be present to Jacob.

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Jacob woke up and said what may be the truest words he had ever spoken: “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it” (verse 16).

This is the description of a world beginning to awaken to the nearness of God. We are all Jacob. We scheme to enhance our futures and fortunes because we think no one out there is watching over us. We stretch the truth and manipulate the outcomes because who knows if there’s a God or not? Even if there is one, He’s too far away or too preoccupied to notice. If there is a heaven, it’s way out there somewhere.

But then we glimpse something. It may not be a dream or a heavenly vision. It may simply be a spark, a surge of joy, or a flash of awe. We bump against the mystery and wonder of it all. Our imaginations are awakened. And we see it: *God* is here. God has been here the whole time. The heavens are open. The whole earth is *full* of His glory.

That’s not just the sun signaling the start of a new day; it’s the witness of the steadfast love of God that will always break the darkness of night. That’s not just a dinner with friends; it’s the music of laughter reminding us we’re not alone. That’s not just the sound of a baby crying in the night and robbing us of sleep; that is the evidence that your child is loved, that she believes you will care for her. These are all gifts from God, ordinary yet extraordinary, earthy and yet filled with glory.

Sure, things can be reduced to technical descriptions and itemized particles, just as a great symphony can be explained as a mathematical sequence of sonic intervals. But music is more than

math, and life is more than a sum of its events. In each moment, in each breath and thought and act, something more is going on. It is not merely ordinary.

Surely the Lord is in this place—the place where we are right now—and we do not know it.

It's true: The whole earth is full of His glory.

THE ONE WHO WATCHES OVER US

The sea was calm that night. A cool breeze came off the water and swept over me as I reclined in a wooden chair. I stared up into the starless sky, listening for the voice of the Lord. I would soon be boarding a plane to come to America by myself. I was seventeen.

That would be my second time moving to the States. The first was seven years earlier, when my parents obeyed the call of the Lord to leave their well-paying jobs and attend a Bible college in Portland, Oregon. My sister was thirteen, and I was ten. We thought the whole thing sounded like an adventure. “Move to America? Let’s do it!” Our three years in the Pacific Northwest were special and full of wonderful memories: the international students at the Bible college, the rich times of worship and prayer at the church connected to it, and all the much-anticipated quintessential American experiences like eating pizza, camping, and playing schoolyard football.

But this time was different. It wouldn’t be our whole family flying across the Pacific; it would just be me. I had watched a few years earlier as my sister went to America for college. She had come home for the summer, and we were on our last vacation together as a family—at a beautiful island resort in Malaysia,

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courtesy of a generous friend of my father's. Soon it would be my turn. Soon it would be time for me to fly to the other side of the world. At seventeen.

Yet, as I sat in that chair by the calm sea, I felt peace. It came like the gentle waves lapping onto the shore. It was a sense of God's presence with me, His nearness to me. He was there, even in that moment.

Some twenty years later I found myself in a similar place. This time sitting not on a beach but on a train in the middle of the English countryside, heading north from London to Durham. I had begun pursuing a doctorate in theology and ministry from Durham University. It was a desire that had been in my heart for a while, and my wife, Holly, encouraged me to go for the "dream option"—to study in the UK. I found a program that required only a few trips over there per year. Holly was a champ throughout the whole process, holding down the fort at home with our four kids. My parents, who had moved from Malaysia to America as I was beginning my doctoral studies, were also a tremendous help.

So there I was, across an ocean from my family, on my own again.

And it all just hit me. The loneliness. The ache. The fear. But also the peace.

It wasn't quite out of nowhere. I had worship music playing in my headphones, and I was reading *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. It was my first time reading the Harry Potter books, and it felt only right since I was in the homeland of author J. K. Rowling—and on a train that had departed from King's Cross station en route to a place where some of the movies had been filmed!

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I had initially begun reading the books to see if our oldest child, then around ten, should read them. I got hooked. The Harry Potter books employ a device known in fantasy fiction writing as incantational magic, as opposed to invocational magic. It is not a magic summoned from beyond the world, invoked from a supernatural beyond. It is a magic that is already present; the world in these sorts of stories is already enchanted. One merely needs to learn how to sing along. (This is what an incantation means.) Rowling, like J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis and so many others before, created a world that is alive with a song, enchanted by a melody; goodness means singing along, and evil is a distortion of the tune.

The third Harry Potter book explores Harry's own longing for his father, or for a father figure. Orphaned as a baby and raised by an aunt and uncle who despise him while spoiling their only child, Harry found a family at Hogwarts, the school for those gifted with magical abilities. The headmaster, Dumbledore, is a sort of fatherly figure but functions more as a sage grandfather. In the third book we are introduced to dementors, ghastly creatures that feed off people's fears and suck out all their joy. The only way to prevent them from doing so is to learn a patronus charm. Rowling chose her words on purpose. The term is an intentional play on the Latin word for a father—*pater*—from which we also get the word for one who supports a project or an artist—*patron*.

Moreover, the phrase the young students must recite to get their patronus—a magical creature who defends them against dementors—is *expecto patronum*, which roughly translates to, "I wait for a guardian." I like to think the phrase echoes the deep biblical longing "Deliver us!"

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Harry struggles to summon a patronus, perhaps because he has so few happy memories—the fuel for making the charm work—or perhaps because he has had so few guardians and defenders. Finally, in the face of certain death as a swarm of dementors approach him, a patronus appears and saves him. But it comes from across a lake. Harry thinks it is his father from beyond the grave coming to save him. As it turns out—spoiler alert—it is Harry himself using the aid of a time turner. Yet in a strange way, it is Harry's belief that his father was watching out for him that gave him the strength to summon the patronus. I could be completely misreading the message, but that's my theory.

When I read that, I set the book down on the train's tray table in front of me and stared out the window. The worship music played on in my ears. I sensed a whisper deep in my soul. *I am with you. I have always been with you. I am watching over you, covering you, protecting you. No attack of the Enemy will prevail. I've got you.* That's what I heard in my heart. My Father in heaven was watching me.

Maybe I was imagining it. Or maybe I was seeing something that had been there all along. *If the whole earth is full of His glory*, if His glory is present to us rather than far away, it makes sense that we have this covering. We have the joy and holy confidence of walking with a present Guardian.

God has been with me . . . in the trip across the Pacific Ocean to go to college in America by myself and in the adventure across the Atlantic to pursue my doctorate. And in all the journeys in between. With others. Or by myself. In joys and in sorrows. In the spectacular and in the ordinary. *Surely the Lord is in this place* even when I did not know it.

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There are moments when it can feel as if life is just carrying you along, like a plane flying over the ocean or a train hurtling through the countryside. You feel alone and far removed from everyone else. Why does it seem like you're the only one who doesn't have it all together? Why does it seem like everyone else is driving her own destiny but you seem to just be along for the ride? Why do the days and weeks seem to speed past like the blurred trees outside a train window while you're sitting idle? Life is just one more morning arriving with the sound of a phone alarm, one more day consumed at your desk, one more evening of scrounging around the kitchen for dinner.

These are the moments of quiet desperation, when the dull ache of loneliness makes the mundane unbearable.

But what if you could catch a glimpse? What if you let your imagination wander and your heart wake up with sight? What if you could see what's been there all along, the God who has always been present?

Your Protector, Deliverer, and Redeemer is watching over you. He is there when you wake, with you as you walk and work. He weeps with you when your heart is breaking; He sings over you when you've lost your words; He sits with you in the stillness. Surely the Lord is in your kitchen and in your car and in your office and in the moments of each day, though you do not know it. Yet.

SACRAMENTAL SEEING

One of the reasons we have such trouble seeing—truly seeing—is that we've been shaped by centuries of cultural tides that have

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taught us not to see, in fact, not to even look for anything beyond.

The Enlightenment was an era of thought that lasted roughly from the late 1600s through the early 1800s and was marked by philosophers and political theorists who saw the world as separated into two realms—the natural and the supernatural. The Enlightenment emerged on the shoulders of the scientific revolution, when new discoveries and advances were creating a sense of optimism about what humans could accomplish. It's always tricky to make blanket statements about somewhat arbitrarily drawn eras of history, but for much of the Western world, the Enlightenment drastically changed the way people saw the world. Instead of a *creation* in which the Creator was present and active, there was just *nature*. God was relegated “upstairs” to the supernatural realm, while humans inhabited the “downstairs” natural realm.

What emerged over time was a stripped-down version of Christianity that is more accurately called Deism. This belief system accepted that the order in creation owed its origins to a creator, but that like any good invention, it did not require its inventor to keep running. This eventually gave way to a rejection of miracles both in Scripture and in contemporary life. After all, why would God make rules only to suspend them whenever He liked? Why set the world up like a great clock only to move the hands at a whim? And if interventions were needed to correct the mechanism, how good was its design to begin with?

The truth is, the residual effects of this kind of thinking are still with us, even though we would never claim to be deists. We freely admit our need for God when it comes to spiritual matters such as

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the forgiveness of sin or the avoidance of hell. But for everything else, we'd rather be at the wheel. *Fine, God may have set up the rules and ordered the world, but I can take it from here.* Or maybe you've thought you *had* to take it from here because God is too busy, far away, or unconcerned to really care. You've been disappointed by His silence, so you've learned to go it alone. Whatever the reason, we move through each day like practical deists, like people who believe in God but have never thought to look for Him in the everyday moments. *Oh sure, there's a God, and I believe in Him. But what does that have to do with my job or my relationships or my money?*

For those who do look for God in the midst of life, faith can sometimes be used as an escape hatch from the boring realities of life. God is a means of transcendence, far above the unimportant, normal stuff. *Why bother about eating dinner with my family when I could go to another prayer meeting? Who cares about my silly job—I just need to listen to more worship music!*

These two extremes—being practical deists or spiritual escapists—are the remnants of warring worldviews. We now falsely assume that things are either/or. They are either common or holy, ordinary or sacred, material or spiritual.

Take, for example, the way we think about miracles. We tend to think of a miracle as God overriding the laws of nature, suspending the machine He built and set into motion, making an exception *just this once*. We have been conditioned to divide the world into physical and spiritual, natural and supernatural. Maybe God will once in a while override the natural and do something supernatural, but surely that's rare. Most of us live without ever witnessing such an event. Thus we make our peace with being ordinary.

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But what if dividing reality into natural and supernatural is not only poor theology but also outmoded science? My doctoral supervisor, David Wilkinson, is a theologian and an astrophysicist. In a *Christian Today* interview on miracles and science, Wilkinson described how quantum theory reveals that the structure of the world in its smallest bits (not a technical term) is nothing like a mechanical clock. “It is a world,” Wilkinson said, “that is unpicturable, uncertain, and in which the cause of events cannot be fully specified.” In other words, there is room for God to act, move, and do the unexpected, precisely because the world is not a closed system, like a machine would be. The writer of the article summarized Wilkinson, saying, “He [God] can ‘push’ electrons here and there and alter the course of events in the world without breaking any of the laws of nature.”¹

This means that miracles are not God *overriding* the laws of the universe; they are signs of God at work *within* His world. (I can hear Jacob whispering again, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.”)

There is a word for this view of the world: *sacramental*. That may conjure images of medieval superstition, or it may just add to the confusion. But a sacrament, as the fifth-century theologian Saint Augustine wrote, is an “outward, visible sign of an inward, invisible grace.”² It is God making Himself known, making His presence felt. It is God opening our eyes to catch a glimpse of His abounding grace.

Two of the practices that are most widely held as sacraments in the church, regardless of denomination, are baptism and communion. Both practices focus not on what we are doing but on

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what God in Christ has done for us and what God through His Spirit is doing in us. At baptism the grace of God marks us as God's own. The waters speak of a new birth—being born of the Spirit. We are children of God, chosen and adopted. The Lord's Table reveals God's love for us through the body and blood of Jesus Christ. He died that we might live; His body was given that we might be whole; He bled that we might be cleansed. Sacraments reveal the glory of God's grace.

To be sacramental is to begin to see all God's gifts and handiwork as icons of His glory and grace. Look at the stars: they show us that even in darkness there is hope. Look at children: they remind us of what matters most. Look at bread: it reveals how wheat plucked from a field and placed in heat becomes something that nourishes life. God takes what appears to be common and makes it a conduit of glory.

Sacramental theology invites us to see the visible as a sign of the invisible, to believe that the common can be a carrier of the holy. Because God made this world, it is capable of being a container for His glory. The common can become sacred not because of a magical invocation that changes it but because this is what creation was made to be. The whole world is full of God's glory! And God has hidden His glory in the ordinary.

YOUR LIFE IS “BREAD” IN JESUS'S HANDS

Every time Jesus took bread in His hands, He did the same few things. He took it, blessed it, broke it, and gave it. Luke, more than

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the other gospel writers, made a point to use the same words every time: *blessed, broken, given*. The book in your hands is about those three words and how they can reshape the way we see our lives.

Jesus took bread, blessed it by giving thanks to the Father, broke it, and gave it. Bread in the hands of Jesus is *blessed, broken, and given*. And so it is for you. Your life, as common and ordinary as bread, in Jesus's hands becomes something more.

In the hands of Jesus, your life becomes *blessed*. This blessedness is not about accumulating or achieving more. Blessedness is about having your true identity recovered and your true calling revealed. It is to be given a new name. Once you were a sinner; now you are a saint. Once you were far off; now you are a cherished family member.

In the hands of Jesus, your life becomes *broken* in a new way. When you place the brokenness of your failure, frailty, and suffering in Jesus's hands, you become open to the grace of God. This brokenness is not about wallowing in your sin or fixating on how miserable you are. To be broken is to allow the grace of God to humble you, to lead you into vulnerability with others, and to transform your heart. After all, bread that is not broken cannot be shared.

In the hands of Jesus, your life becomes *given*. You realize you are not here for yourself. Life with Jesus is deeply personal but never private. The openness that comes from being broken is meant to lead you outward. There is a hunger in the world around us, a deep groan for something more. When your life becomes blessed and broken in Jesus's hands, He gives *you* out for the life of the world. You become the way others find the Bread of Life. But to be

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that way, you must first experience the blessing and embrace the brokenness—only then will you be consecrated to bring change in powerful ways.

Some scholars believe that these three movements became the shape of early Christian worship. For that reason the third chapter of each movement of this book focuses on what it looks like to live it out in the community of faith. What does it mean to be blessed together, to be broken with and for one another, to be given for one another?

We may have wondered, *Is there anything more ordinary than bread?* Now we see it: *Is there anything more glorious than bread?*

COME, CREATOR SPIRIT

In the pages ahead you will discover what happens when you awake from resignation, when you surrender your frenzy, when you turn over your failures and disappointments, placing your life in Jesus's hands. You'll discover what happens when you realize that the common can become sacred, that the material is not cut off from the spiritual, that the stuff of everyday life was made to be a container for glory.

The nineteenth-century English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins captured the wonder of this in his famous poem "God's Grandeur." He wrote that the world emanates God's splendor, but the human race keeps working without ever stopping to worship. People are busy with the daily grind, and the world bears the stains and scars from it. The soil is holy ground, but our feet are covered. And yet the closing lines of the final stanza haunt with beauty:

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Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.³

Imagine it: the Holy Spirit, the One who was brooding over the primordial waters of chaos in the beginning, hovers over each predawn blackness, waiting to breathe life again into the world.

And into you. Even now, the Spirit hovers over you. Welcome Him. Let Him open your eyes to truly see. Let Him open your ears to truly hear. The Spirit of God is the glory that fills the earth. He is how God is in *this* place even when we do not know it. The Spirit is how oil and water and bread become portals for the presence of God. The Spirit is how the ordinary and the extraordinary, the natural and the supernatural, come together in the sacramental. One of oldest Christian confessions calls the Spirit the “Lord, the Giver of Life.” The same Holy Spirit who filled up the world with life fills all who are in Christ. And because of that, nothing about your life is *merely ordinary*.

The ancient prayer of the church beckons Him: *Veni Creator Spiritus*—“Come, Creator Spirit”:

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come
from thy bright heav’nly throne;
come, take possession of our souls,
and make them all thine own.⁴

So we pray, “Come, Creator Spirit.” We are ready to surrender, to return our lives to the Lord, to go back to the beginning so that we can begin with God. We come to place our lives—our

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common and ordinary days, our imperfect and inadequate selves—fully in Jesus’s hands. These are the hands of the One who is “the image of the invisible God,” the One by whom “all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,” the One through whom and for whom “all things were created,” the One who is “before all things,” the One in whom “all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15–17).

Everything begins here.

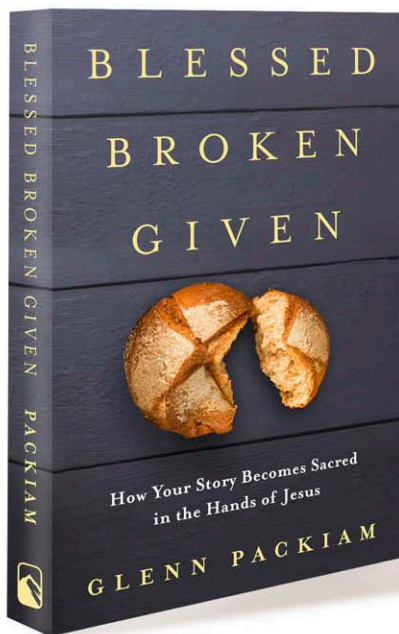
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