

Redemption from the Potter

Jeremiah 18:1-6

PW Emerson – 03/17/2019 – Ten:27 Ministries

This Lenten season we're doing a series on Redemption

- Last week we looked at Ruth – how redemption came to an unlikely place

Today looking at the book of Jeremiah, getting redemption from the potter.

Let me set the scene

- Jeremiah is a prophet, someone proclaiming God's Word, in the kingdom of Judah, the southern 2 tribes
- He is prophet at the end of the nation of Judah – it gets conquered by Babylon
- Although Jeremiah is proclaiming God's Word, people are NOT being receptive
- That's why God is allowing the nation and the people to be conquered
- The first portion of the book of Jeremiah, which was written to God's people in Judah, is a warning about what will happen if they don't straighten out

We're familiar with parables from the Gospel accounts – the accounts of the life of Jesus

However parables were often used by rabbis & prophets trying to make a point

Parables were used in hopes that people would be able to better relate to the point at hand

Today's piece is a parable about the relationship between God and God's people

Jeremiah 18:1-6

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ²"Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." ³So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴But the pot he

was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me. ⁶He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.

The people needed the reminder that God is the maker of everything and can do whatever he wants.

And God will do what he sees fit!

It's a parable of the creation story!

Genesis 2:7

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Jeremiah is stressing to the people to recognize their relationship with God.

Sadly, the message fell on deaf ears.

Let's you and I learn from their mistakes.

FIRST ... think about WHERE ARE YOUR LUMPS?

We need to be willing to admit our true situation.

In the analogy of the potter and the clay, think about your shortcomings that God may want to work out.

Are you too

- Arrogant?
- Proud?
- Missing the point?
- Have the wrong priorities?
- Not using your gifts or talents?
- Selfish?
- Rude?
- Short-sighted?

Will Rogers' stage specialty used to be rope tricks. He was nothing special. One day, on stage, in the middle of his act, he got tangled in his lariat, his lasso. Instead of getting upset, he drawled, "A rope ain't so bad to get tangled up in if it ain't around your neck." The audience roared. Encouraged by the warm reception, Rogers began adding humorous comments to all his performances. It was the comments, not the rope tricks, that eventually made him famous.

Author Unknown

He was molded from rodeo performer to use humor.
Then, he was successful.

Jeremiah knew that the people had flaws.
That's ok – we're human.

But the people in Jeremiah's time were unwilling to see their flaws, to recognize what needed God's hand.

Life was getting worse and worse for God's people during the life of Jeremiah and it was because they were unwilling to see their lumps.

They were stubborn and defiant.

Let's you and I learn from their mistake and allow God to help us with our lumps, to be crafted into a better creation.

SECOND ... YIELD TO GOD'S MOLDING

It is only when we fully yield to god that God can make us into a beautiful vessel.

You may feel that your body doesn't work the way it should, breaking down all the time.

You may feel that you have nothing to offer.

BUT ... you know the difference of value between a \$1 bucket from the warehouse and a \$1000 vase is of little importance if both are full of Gold.

When you think of yourself, don't focus on the container or the vessel.

Focus on what's on the inside.

When you let God in, you're more valuable than every vessel without God!

You're more valuable that the world will ever know!

There is no telling what God can do with a piece of clay. Why does it seem like God takes the unlikely things and turn them into something great?

We need to YIELD TO GOD'S MOLDING.

God can make treasures out of trash, Jewels out of junk, glory out of garbage, Riches out of Rubbish.

He can make Diamonds out of coal, Righteousness out of Rift raft.

God said ...

- Give Me a murderer like Moses, I'll turn him into a great leader.
- Give Me a dreamer like Joseph, I'll turn him into a commander over Egypt.
- Give Me a shepherd boy like David I'll turn him into a king.
- Give Me a child like Jeremiah I'll turn him into a prophet.
- Give Me a fisherman like Peter I'll turn him into an apostle.
- Give Me a tax collector like Matthew, and I will turn him into a disciple.
- Give Me a persecutor like Paul I'll turn him into a preacher.
- Give Me someone who has been married 5 times like the woman at the well, & I'll turn her into an evangelist.

Want to do something great for God?

Let God mold you, change you, and you'll find out!

The people in Jeremiah's time were unwilling to yield to God.

If you do that, you'll never realize your potential.

Back in 1501, Michelangelo was commissioned to work on a statue. At the time, he had a big block of marble that was spoiled and abandoned. Most artists would say, “Who needs this ruined hunk of marble?” This marred block of marble was called “the Giant.” It was over 16 feet and weighted over a ton. It was lying in the mud. And they were going to cut it up for tombstones.

But Michelangelo couldn’t take his eyes off it. Every day he would walk to where it was, and he would touch it, measure it and imagine the possibilities. He decided to work with it. And so for two years, Michelangelo worked without any contact with the outside world. He chipped off the parts of the marble that were bad. And he chiseled the rest of it into the image he wanted it to be.

Today, his amazing statue of David is considered to be one of the greatest works of art in Renaissance culture. It’s a wonderful example of how an artist can take something that is marred and turn it into something that is marvelous.

God can do even more because he’s God and he knows us better!

YIELD TO GOD’S MOLDING

Arise Get up from your existing position – Move out from where you are!

Don’t go up into a place of worldliness, arrogance and despair.

Rather go *down* to the potter’s house.

It is in going down that you hear the word of God

Too many today want to go *up* and they end up going *down*.

Those who go *down* and humble themselves under the word of God go *up* into the purposes of God their lives!

YIELD TO GOD'S MOLDING

THIRD ... GRASP WHAT GOD IS MAKING

If you let God mold you, get on board with what he is making you into!

Go with it!

Don't fight it!

Jeremiah 18:6

He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?"

Don't fight God.

Embrace what God is making you into!

We, people, have this habit of thinking we know better than God.

We tell God ...

- I want to do *this*
- *This* is better
- Trust me – I know what I'm doing!
- I'm capable!
- I should do *this* first!
- I don't want to give up *this*.

Instead of getting on board with the reality that God is God and we are not!

God is the maker! God is the potter!

Isaiah 45:9

“Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker,
those who are nothing but potsherds
among the potsherds on the ground.

Does the clay say to the potter,
‘What are you making?’

Does your work say,
‘The potter has no hands’?

Hundreds of years later, the Apostle Paul said the same thing:

Romans 9:20-21

²⁰But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’”

²¹Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

Get onboard with what God is making you into.

You can only imagine what you are capable of!

Get onboard with what God is molding you into and you’ll find out!

CONCLUSION

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water in his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your masters house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts." The pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the masters house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of

the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the Pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, “Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pots side? That’s because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you’ve watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my masters table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house.”

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We are all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, the Lord will use our flaws to grace His Father’s table. In God’s great economy, nothing goes to waste. Don’t be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you too can be the cause of beauty. Know that in our weakness we find our strength!