

The Potter's Clay

"Ordinary Object, Extraordinary Meanings"



"Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

Isaiah 64:8 NIV

Do you want to be clay? Isn't that the worthless stuff that interferes with a good garden and that mass that doesn't absorb water and causes run-offs. But in the hands of a good potter, clay can be changed into a beautiful object. The beauty depends on the potter.

In the Old Testament, God gives Jeremiah a lesson using a clay pot. It is very harsh, but God did not "sugar-coat" the truth. The people of Israel had been straying from God. He told Jeremiah to go to a potter's house and see what the potter did with a clay pot that was not right. After Jeremiah said how the potter destroyed the clay pot that was not right, the Lord told him to go talk to the people of Israel because they had strayed from God. God was comparing them to a clay pot.

Jeremiah was afraid for his life. God didn't quit. He tried again to have Jeremiah warn the people. He told Jeremiah to call together the leaders and take a clay pot with him. Then he was to go outside the town and tell them what God had said. When they did not listen, Jeremiah was to throw the clay pot to the ground and smash it. This was what would happen to the people of Israel. The next day, Jeremiah was whipped and put in stocks. (Jeremiah 18-20)

Clay is not always easy to work with, just like us. But the good potter can refine the clay by removing tiny stones or air bubbles or other impurities and work it until it is able to be formed into an object of beauty. The people of that day were familiar with clay and how it was molded. They just refused to listen to Jeremiah.

In Genesis 2, God is pictured as forming man from the earth as a potter forms his pots from clay. There is a beautiful poem written by James Weldon Johnson called "The Creation." It is well worth reading.

When Job is going through all his problems, he refers to himself as clay in the hands of God. Isaiah uses clay to refer to the relationship between God and man. We are all His people though we are very different. There are different colors and textures of clay. It is wonderful to know that we are not just a number. We are individuals in the hands of a wonderful God. The Master Potter doesn't deal with us in mass but

*"Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the
sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far
corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle
of his hand;
This Great God,
Like a mammy bending over her
baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till he shaped it in his own image;
Then into it he blew the breath of
life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen." –from
The Creation by J. W. Johnson*

as individuals. His love is given to each of us. We have that same choice. He's the potter; we are the clay. We each have a unique design, talent, and purpose. When we submit to the authority of the potter; we are the clay.

When we submit to the authority of God we are transformed by His love. Why clay? When clay is first brought from the ground it is unusable; it is hard and full of impurities. We are filled with sin. As the clay is refined we are also refined by the Master Potter. We often need to be softened and pliable. We need to have our sins removed so we can pass on the love of God to others.

If we get an opportunity to watch the potter at work with his clay, we can see the changes as it is made into a thing of beauty. Also, we can see the Master Potter work with individuals and make them into a person of beauty.

In a book called Principles of Decorative Design, the author writes "It is the artist which gives the value--and not the material." We don't have much to say in our design or do we? If we allow God to work with us we can become beautiful. We can sing with others the wonderful song "Spirit of the Living God" by Daniel Iverson.

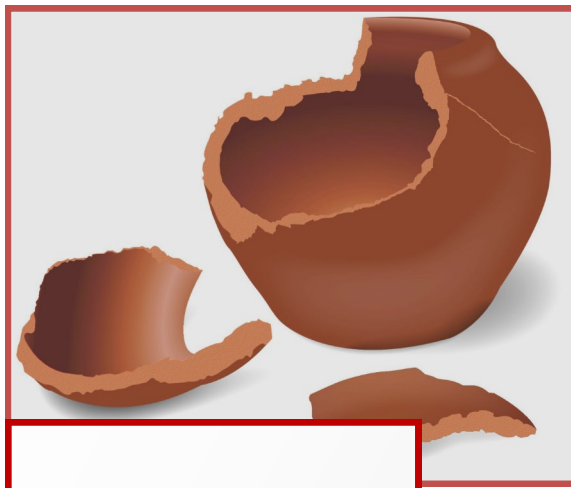
"Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

*Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me,
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me."*

For as from the same piece of clay a potter may fashion either a pot or a tile, so the Devil may shape a witch into a wolf or a cat or even a goat, without subtracting from her and without adding to her at all. For this occurs just as clay is first molded into one, then shaped into another form, for the Devil is a potter and his witches are but clay.

Alma Kallas



"As Children bring their broken toys with tears for us to mend, I brought my broken dreams to God, because He was my friend. But then, instead of leaving Him in peace, to work alone, I hung around and tried to help in ways that were my own. Finally I took them back and said, 'Dear God, why are you so slow?' 'My child,' He said, 'What could I do?' You never did let go"

You must be the change you wish to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for caring for me. Please help me to allow You, the Master Potter, to mold me into a beautiful person. Help me to not become harden to Your love, but to serve You every day. Amen

1. Are you willing to be clay in the hands of the Master Potter? What does that entail?
2. Was Jeremiah justified in being concerned about his life?
3. Have you ever seen the potter at work?
4. Have you ever seen the Master Potter at work?

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Prayer:

God, help me to let go of my need to know what's going to happen next and just trust Your plan.