



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church
February 2, 2022
DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Photo: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence
"Our God is a God who saves;
from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death." (Psalm 68:20)

Did You Know?

Let's recall what we have learned about Jeremiah so far:

- **Jeremiah** – also called the *"weeping prophet"* was a member of the priestly household of Hilkiah. His hometown was Anathoth (1:1), so he may have been a descendant of Abiathar (1 Kings 2:26), a priest during the days of King Solomon.
- The Lord commanded Jeremiah not to marry and raise children because the impending divine Judgement on Judah would sweep away the next generation.
- Jeremiah's closest companion was his faithful secretary, Baruch, who wrote down Jeremiah's words as the prophet dictated them. It is possible that Baruch was also responsible for the final compilation of the book of Jeremiah, since no event recorded in chapters 1-51 occurred after 580 BC. Chapter 52 is an appendix added by a later hand.
- His book is dated between 626 and 586 BC. It was a period of storm and stress, when the doom of entire nations – including Judah itself – was being sealed. (The NIV Study Bible; Jeremiah)
- Chapters 1-25 [which our today's reading is part of] contains predominantly sayings of Jeremiah. In this section we can find numerous texts in the 'poetic' language characteristic of prophetic sayings. (Rolf Rendtorff: The Old Testament; pg. 201)
- Three chapters (18:1-20:18) focusing on lessons the Lord taught Jeremiah at the potter's workshop, probably before 605 BC. The potter's workshop was possibly located on the slopes of the Valley of Ben Hinnom, hence the *"go down"* expression in this passage. The Hebrew word for *"marred"* implies that the flaw was in the clay itself, not in the potter's skill. (The NIV Study Bible; Jeremiah)

Personal Insight

"Even in our brokenness, we have immense value to our Master Potter." - to me this sentence represents the big encouragement from the Our Daily Bread devotion you can read below.

I believe we don't need to have any major physical or mental health issues to feel that we are *"marred"*. And as we advance in age, our issues can easily accumulate. The Scriptures tell us that regardless of our imperfections - perceived or overlooked - we are beloved beyond measure. Moreover, when we place our flaws into the hands of our Creator God, the Almighty has the skills and power to reshape us and to make us whole. This can result in what Jesus formulated with these words: **"so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."** (John 15:11).

Grace and peace to you all,

Rev. Maria



The Potter's Wheel

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.

Jeremiah 18:4

READ Jeremiah 18:1 – 6

In 1952, in an effort to prevent clumsy or careless people from breaking items in a shop, a Miami Beach storeowner posted a sign that read: "You break it, you buy it." The catchy phrase served as a warning to shoppers. This type of sign can now be seen in many boutiques.

Ironically, a different sign might be placed in a real potter's shop. It would say: "If you break it, we'll make it into something better." And that's exactly what's revealed in Jeremiah 18.

Jeremiah visits a potter's house and sees the potter shaping the "marred" clay with his hands, carefully handling the material and forming "it into another pot" (v. 4). The prophet reminds us that God is indeed a skillful potter, and we are the clay. He is sovereign and can use what He creates to both destroy evil and create beauty in us.

God can shape us even when we're marred or broken. He, the masterful potter, can and is willing to create new and precious pottery from our shattered pieces. God doesn't look at our broken lives, mistakes, and past sins as unusable material. Instead, He picks up our pieces and reshapes them as He sees best.

Even in our brokenness, we have immense value to our Master Potter. In His hands, the broken pieces of our lives can be reshaped into beautiful vessels that can be used by Him (v. 4). – By **Katara Patton**

REFLECT & PRAY

God, You're the Potter and I'm the clay. Mold me as You wish. Remind me that I'm in Your skillful and caring hands. Amen.

What comfort can you find in knowing God is a potter who can form something new from your broken pieces? How can you relax as the Potter reshapes you into a beautiful vessel?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Jeremiah used the analogy of the potter and clay to illustrate God's freedom to judge and restore His people. Even if God promised that a nation would be "built up and planted" (Jeremiah 18:9), that didn't mean a nation should become complacent and arrogant, for God is free to respond to unrepentant sin with judgment (v. 10). At the same time, God's judgment of Israel didn't suggest their permanent destruction; for if Israel repented, God, like a potter reshaping clay, would freely reshape and rebuild Israel (v. 8).

The metaphor of the potter and clay also emphasizes God's good purposes for His creation. A potter responds to defects in the clay (lack of moisture, a lump, or other issues) by further working the clay into a usable form. Likewise, God doesn't throw away His creation but continues to work toward His good purposes. - By **Monica La Rose**

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