TITLE: Being Clay

TEXT: Jere. 18:1-12; Is. 64:8; 2 Co. 4:5-8;

 Ephe. 4:11-13; 1 Co. 12:4-11

INTRODUCTION: The Hymn that we sang a little while ago, Have Thy Own way Lord, is one of my favorite hymns and the message that it contains, if you meditate upon its words, is pretty powerful!

 When you think about it this is the essence of our Salvation and the calling of God upon our life as a Christian.. The Lord having His own way in our life.

 It is interesting what originally inspired the writing of this great old hymn..

 An elderly woman at a prayer meeting one night pleaded, “It really doesn’t matter what you do with us, Lord, just have your own way in our lives.”

 At this prayer meeting was a woman named Adelaide Pollard, a rather well known Bible Teacher who was deeply discouraged because she had been unable to raise the necessary funds for a desired trip to Africa to do missions work.

 She was moved and convicted by this older woman’s sincere and dedicated request of God.

 At home that evening Miss Pollard meditated on Jeremiah 18:3-6….

**Jer. 18:3-6NIV)
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:**  **6“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.**

Before going to bed that night Adelaide Pollard wrote all four stanzas of this song that we sang this morning…

 *Have Thine own way Lord, have Thine own way..Thou art the potter I am the clay….Mold me and make me after thy will-- while I am waiting yielded and still….*

 There are a lot of analogies in Scripture of God being the potter and we being the clay.

**Isa. 64:8 (NIV)
8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father.**

 **We are the clay, you are the potter;**

 **we are all the work of your hand.**

There are some pretty tremendous promises in Scripture for us when we allow ourselves to be like clay in the hands of the potter…

 If we really grasp the implication of being clay in the hands of the potter in can really make a difference in our life as a Christian. It can take a lot of the pressures that we may feel in this life and in our walk with the lord away…

 When we start having problems in our walk with the Lord, and in life in general for that matter, it is almost always because we have lost sight of what it means to be clay in the hands of the potter.

 The fact is most of us would rather be the potter wouldn’t we?

 We want to be the one in control of our life. We want to be the one in control of fashioning and molding our lives’, don’t we?

 But when we take the position of the potter instead of the clay things really start to get messed up in our life, especially where our faith and relationship with God is concerned.

 Show me a Christian that is really struggling in their faith and I will show you a Christian that has forgotten what it means to be clay in the master Potter’s hand and they are trying to be the potter of their own life.

 I want to go back to Jeremiah chapter 18 and look at the entire context of this passage,,,,,

**Jer. 18:1 -12 (NIV)
1This 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: 6“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. 7If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, 8and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. 9And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, 10and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.**

**11“Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.’ 12But they will reply, ‘It’s no use. We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart.’”**

What is the problem here? The problem is that the people wanted to be the potter and not the clay**…We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart.’”**

 Was Gods intent in chastising His people for their disobedience by destroying them? No!

His intent in announcing His coming judgment against them was to try to get them to realize that He is the potter and they are the clay.

His intent was to try to get them to prepare the clay of their lives so that they could be fashioned into the vessel that he had in mind.

The potter’s responsibility is to fashion the vessel, but sometimes it is necessary to first prepare the clay that He is working with so that it can be fashioned into the vessel that He desires the clay to become.

EXAMPLE: A visitor to the shop of a famous potter was puzzled by one operation which seemed to have little purpose. The potter was beating a lump of clay with a large mallet. It looked as if nothing was happening, and so the one who was taking the tour finally asked, "Sir, why are you doing that?" "Just wait and watch the results; then you'll understand," was the reply.

 He heeded the advice and soon noted that the top of the clay began to quiver and swell as little bumps formed on its surface. "Now you can see the need for the pounding," said the potter. "I could never shape the clay into a worthwhile vessel if these bubbles remained in it, so I must gradually work them out."

 The one watching was a Christian and immediately recalled the 18th chapter of Jeremiah. He saw more clearly than ever before why the great Potter must work upon our souls. The discipline of correction and the trials God sends our way are sometimes necessary to prepare the clay of our life so that we can be fashioned into the vessels He wants us to be..

 Sometimes we may need to get the air bubbles of self will and self pride and self control pounded out of us so that the clay of our life may be prepared so that it can be fashioned into the vessel that God desires us to be.

 We have not only been called to be the clay, but we have been called to be clay that is prepared for the potter to work with.

 The specific vessel that God has for us to become will be different for all of us. The vessels that God has for us to be fashioned into will be as varied as we as individuals are varied.

 If you are really into pottery you know that many vessels’ that are masterpieces are made from completely different types of clay.

 Some specific kinds of clay from specific areas are very desirable by master potters. Each masterpiece may come from a different lump of clay but all have become masterpieces because of the skill of the potter.

 Each of us represent a different lump of clay, and some clay may be easier to work with then others, but it is not the clay, in and of itself, that determines the quality of the vessel, but it is the ability of the potter that determines the ultimate quality of the finished work.

The only real responsibility of the clay is to be as moldable and pliable as it possibly can be. To be of a consistency and temperature that the potter can work with and fashion into the vessel that he desires.

 We all may take a different shape because we all come from a different lump of clay.

 We all may have a different use to the potter as He determines the need, but the vessel that we are to become is to be filled with the same substance.

**2 Cor. 4:5 -8 (NIV)
5For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

**7But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.**

**6For God, ….made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

**7But we have this treasure** (the treasure of His light shining in our hearts) in **jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.**

God fashions us all as a vessel to contain His Holy Spirit.

 We each may take a different form, we each may receive a different specific calling upon our life of service to Him, but we all have been fashioned to contain the same substance.

 The Spirit of the living God is the substance that these vessels have been fashioned by God to contain.

 We all start out as a lump of cold, stiff clay. We all start out as a substance that is not easily fashioned or molded.

 It is only through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and our applying it to our life through surrender of our life to Him by allowing Him to become our Lord and our Savior that the lump of clay of our life becomes fashionable and moldable to God.

 When we come to God sorry and repentant for our sin and ask His forgiveness and give Him control of our life through surrender of our life to Him, he gives us a measure of His Grace.

 It is only that measure of His Grace that will dilute and soften the clay of our life so that it can be fashioned into the vessel that He wants us to become.

 The vessel that God fashions us into may very in form from person to person, but the substance that we are to hold is always the same.

**Eph. 4:11 -13 (NIV)
11It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers**……(this speaks of different kinds of vessels)

**1 Cor. 12:4-11 (NIV)
4There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.**

**7Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.**

 **8To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to** **each one, just as he determines.**

 What is this telling us? We are all different vessels that may be used in different areas of service to God but we all contain the same substance.

 As Christians we have all been and are being fashioned by God into different kinds of vessels that are to contain the same substance.

 Too often we think that if we are to be a vessel of God we must look exactly like other vessels of God.

 If we see a vessel that looks different from ourselves we have a tendency to think that they have not been fashioned by God because their vessel doesn’t look exactly like our vessel does…

 I have seen people that at first sight I assume that they are not a vessel that God has fashioned merely because of how they look.

 Usually it is people who look different from ourselves.

 Some of the biggest surprises in my life have come from forming an opinion of someone from outside appearance and then after getting to know them and seeing the substance of their life find that they take on a whole new look. People who may look like a sinner but in fact are a saint.

 Before Paul was converted he was a sinner who most probably looked like a saint, and after Peter’s conversion he was a saint who probably still looked much like a sinner if you were to just judge them just from outward appearance..

 Paul was brought up well and was an educated man..

Peter was a rough and tumble fisherman probably looking more like a merchant marine or dock worker…

 Paul was the guy who walks around in a three piece suit while peter is the kind of guy you would expect to find with a shirt with the sleeves torn off so that his tattoos would show.

 And then there was John the Baptist. I wonder what we would have thought of him if we just saw him from across the street. I guy who wore a camel hair coat on a hot day with un-kept hair and who ate bugs.

 Or what about James and John? Two young men nicknamed Sons of Thunder.

 What kind of lifestyle would you have to live to get a handle like that?

 And before these men came to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ their looks most probably represented who they were on the inside.

 But when these men accepted Jesus as the Lord and Savior of their life God filled them with the substance of Himself… He filled them with His Holy Spirit and they each went through a great metamorphosis.

 They each may have looked the same as always on the outside but God transformed them on the inside. Through repentance and confession of their sin and embracing Jesus as their Lord they mixed the grace of God with the clay of their life making their life something that could be molded and fashioned by God into a vessel useful for His eternal Kingdom and purpose.

 Gutson Borglum was the sculptor who carved the massive figures of four American presidents -- Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt -- on Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota.

 When asked how he produced the amazing work, he replied, "Those figures were there for forty million years. All I had to do was dynamite 400,000 tons of granite to bring them into view.

 So it is with us. Before Christ is allowed into our life we are all like blocks of stone. Then as we seek God’s forgiveness for our sin and ask Christ Jesus to come into our heart giving Him control of the vessel of our life, Christ starts to shape our lives, chipping away those things that must go and replacing them with character that honors Him.

 As He hammers away at our lump of clay and the bubbles or self are worked out of us we start to take on the form that He has for us to be.

 Through obedience and surrender to His will we become fashionable clay in the hand of the potter. We will start to become a vessel that is useful for His purpose. We will start to become a masterpiece of the master potter that is of great value and worth in His sight, and of great value and worth and significance in the world in which we live, as He places more and more of the substance of Himself within these earthen vessels of clay that He has fashioned.

 And as parents we are also called to prepare the clay of our children's lives by striving to bring them up knowing Jesus so they too will become fashionable clay in the master potter’s hands.

Poem by Dave Stone

I took a piece of plastic clay,

And idly fashioned it one day.

And as my fingers pressed it still,

It moved and yielded to my will.

I came again when the days were passed,

And the bit of clay was hard at last.

The form I gave it still it bore,

But I could change that form no more.

I took a piece of living clay,

And gently formed it day by day;

And molded with my power and art,

A young child’s soft and yielding heart.

I came again when the days were gone,

It was a man I looked upon.

He still that early impress wore,

But I could change that form no more.

 This morning have you allowed, are you allowing the Lord to have His own way in your life?

 Are we allowing Him to be the potter of our life? Have we resigned ourselves to be clay in the hands of the potter?

 Allowing Him to mold and fashion us into the vessel that He has for us to be?

 A vessel filled with the substance of Himself so that we can reveal Him and His craftsmanship in and to our world with the vessel of our life?

 Have you come to the place of total and complete surrender to God this morning whereby your heart cries out to Him, “Have Thine own way Lord, have thine own way, You are the potter I am the clay! Mold me and make me after thy will, while I am waiting yielded and still.”

Prayer