

**9-11-22**

Sermon- Be Receptive to God's Leading

Scripture- Jeremiah 18: 1-11, CTW PS 14

Hymns- 641, 596, 607

Theme- As the potter molded or shaped a clay pot on the wheel, defects often appeared. The potter had power over the clay to either permit the defects to stay or totally reshape the pot. Likewise, God has the power to reshape us to fit His purposes. We need to be willing to accept God's impact on our lives and yield to His reshaping.

**Consider the Pottery Process:**

**Ask anyone who works with pottery as hobby or a lifestyle and they will likely tell you that there are three parts to pottery. Those three parts are the clay, the potter's wheel and the design of the potter.**

They will also tell that unless it is a piece designed from a mold that every piece of pottery is unique---one of a kind.

So are we as people and so is every nation---unique. God has a plan for our lives that includes both a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11). When we yield to God, He can mold us for His purposes so much easier.

How many times have you seen a Capitol One commercial where you always hear the question, "What's in your wallet?" As we hear today's text a better question to ask is **"What's in your clay?" More specifically the passage is asking us to ponder what is in our clay that makes us resistant to how God is trying to mold us and shape us?**

In Jeremiah 18:1-11, we have a parable that came about through what God revealed to Jeremiah when he went down to the potter's house. God helped Jeremiah to associate the clay with

the house of Israel and the potter with God. The point was obvious. God was saying to the house of Israel through this prophetic parable, "Why will you not let me mold you to be a vessel for my purposes?"

Today we will explore the danger of independence, the danger of spiritual adolescence and the need for spiritual conformity.

## **I. The Danger Of Independence**

### **A. Wait, Don't we like our independence?**

We like to be able to plan our own way don't we? Surely, we all like our independence. We like to be autonomous, but we cannot preserve ourselves. How often have you known sinners that enjoyed being told that they are sinners and that they need to change? Naturally, they were not happy with Jeremiah when he shared with them that they were like "spoiled clay" that a potter had to remold. They even got so mad at Jeremiah that they wanted to kill him (Jeremiah 18:23).

Are you Pilot or co-pilot? As someone has said, "We tend to reduce His greatness and majesty down to a few lines in a chorus. Our thinking of God as our buddy or our co-pilot or our friend on the seashore is way below the dignity of God who spoke, and the world came to be." (Ken Hemphill. ed. Nelson's Annual Preacher's Sourcebook: 2016. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015, p. 6).

Why is it important to allow God to be our pilot instead of our co-pilot? **Proverbs 16:9** says "The human mind plans the way, but the LORD directs the steps". **Proverbs says 20:24** "A person's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand their own way?". **How can anyone successfully do anything that will last without God's input? What's in YOUR clay?**

## **B. What had their independence gotten them into?**

**1) Trouble:** Their autonomous spirit got them to believing that they did not need God. They were deserving of destruction, but they were told that they could amend their ways and avoid destruction by changing their ways so that God could mold them into the nation He wanted them to be. **What's in YOUR Clay?**

**2) They got Amnesia:** Jeremiah's audience were descendants of those whom God had rescued from Egyptian captivity centuries ago. **They clearly developed spiritual amnesia about their history.** If the Lord had not rescued them, then they would eventually cease to exist as a nation.

**3) Their Desire for Shortcuts:** Like a "once and done flu shot" we have a tendency to want a "once and done" way of living. Have we ever wanted God to mold us with a "once and done" frame of mind? The Apostle Paul wanted it that way when he asked God to remove the thorn from his flesh (**II Corinthians 12:7**) but God refused and instead made **all things work together Paul's good (Romans 8:28).**

**4) The Got Free Adjustments:** Just like a potter, God will make the necessary adjustments to achieve the desired results of the vessel He is designing us to be. Have you ever wished that getting a chiropractic adjustment was a "one and done" thing? Just like a chiropractor makes adjustments for our backs so we can move better, God makes the necessary adjustments to mold us and shape us in our lives so we can serve Him better.

**5) They Developed Stubbornness:** Sometimes we can be stubborn and even strong-willed like adolescents who think we know what is best for us. **What's in YOUR clay?**

## **II. The Danger Of Spiritual Adolescence**

### **A. What does adolescence have to do with this parable?**

**1) Guidance:** Do you remember how Jiminy Cricket tried to be a guide to Pinocchio? Pinocchio was naïve and certainly needed guidance so he would stay on the right path. Anyone who has ever seen the animated classic Pinocchio can remember how Pinocchio would get into trouble when he neglected the necessary guidance. The story seemed to be like a parable for children and preteens alike. But, what about the adolescent years?

**2) Adolescence:** There is an eight stage theory about how we all develop from the time of our birth till the time of our old age. The fifth stage is Identity versus role confusion during the adolescent years of life. It is in that stage when young people begin to try to figure out who they are and how they fit in. Just think back to how your peers changed over the summer between the end of fifth grade and the beginning of middle school.

**3) We Develop Adolescent Spirituality:** In his book *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis tells of a Senior demon Wormwood who has a nephew apprentice known as "Screwtape". Wormwood trains Screwtape through a series of letters. He tells how to disrupt, distract and deceive and hinder the growth of Christians. The key is to Keep their minds off the Biblical fact that there is just True and False, black and white and create a situation where there are many answers to the same question. **What's in YOUR clay?**

**How many of us like to think that that we can have good character apart from our relationship with God?**

How many people feel that they would be lowering their character to be seen by us? How much do we fall short of the people God calls us to be because we do not depend on Him and the idea that there is ONE TRUTH!?

### **III. The Need For Spiritual Conformity**

#### **A. So, What gets into us that spoils us?**

**1) Ambitious pride: Proverbs 16:18** tells us “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (ESV). It is our pride that will make us resist God’s molding and adjustments.  
**THINK ABOUT IT!**

**2) Impulsiveness:** Do we get impatient and act on our own because we do not think God was acting fast enough? Aren’t we told to be still and wait on God for a reason?. We need to be still long enough to know God and His sovereignty!

**3) Broken promises:** God’s chosen people went from being slaves in Egypt to becoming God’s chosen people---God’s priesthood called them to be like a lighthouse to those in darkness. But they went from being God’s chosen people of promise to becoming “promise” breakers who enslaved themselves with sin as their master. Until they allowed God to make the necessary adjustments in molding and shaping them for His purposes, they got behind in the plans God had for them (Jeremiah 29:11). **What’s in YOUR clay?**

**4) The turtle and the scorpion:** Chances are that we have all heard the moral in the story about the turtle and the scorpion. A scorpion runs into a turtle on the side of a river bank. He wants to get the other side. The turtle knows it’s the scorpion’s nature to sting. However, the scorpion convinces the turtle he won’t sting him. But before the turtle completes the trip the scorpion stung the turtle in the neck. The turtle asks why he stung him. “You promised you would not do that”. **The scorpion’s response was “You knew who I was before you gave me a ride. You knew its my nature to sting.”** We all know that broken promises destroy trust! God never breaks his promises to us.

**B. Why is it so important that we as the clay conform to the potter?**

**1) Their future:** The house of Israel’s future depended on changing their ways. They could never be who God called them to

be without surrendering to the hand of the God as the potter of their lives!

**2) Our future:** Our future depends on allowing God to remold and reshape us to make us into a new vessel.

**3) Mercy:** God always keeps His promises! God will keep His promise to reshape us if we repent and yield, but He will also keep His promise to pluck up, break down and destroy if a nation refuses to repent. Nineveh repented and they were remolded and shaped by God who showed them mercy when Jonah went to preach to them and everybody including the king repented in sackcloth and ashes. Nahum is the sequel to Jonah. Nahum was sent to address the judgment on Nineveh one hundred and fifty years later.

**5) We Need To Be Vessels of promise:** God wants to mold us--our nation and other nations into being a vessels of promise to make a difference today and for those who come after us.

**6) Helpful vessels:** God wants us all to be helpful vessels who make a difference and leave a legacy of the vessels that He designed for us to be! **What's in YOUR clay?**

**With that I want to close with a short poem labeled "MY LIFE"**

My life shall touch a dozen lives before this day is done;

Leave countless marks for good or ill, before sets the evening sun.

This is the wish I always wish, the prayer I always pray:

Lord, may my life help the other lives it touches on the way.

Amen? Let Us Pray...