

At The Potter's Wheel

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 09/08/19

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

Waunakee, WI

There is something so amazing as glass-blowing & pottery.

My only experience at pottery was at an Orientation Experience at
UW-Stevens Pt.

I remember taking the clay out of a plastic bag and having to kneed it,
working it into a ball, throwing it on a circle of wood and then
placing that wood on a wheel.

With your hands, you begin to work to form an inside; then the clay
might have worked its way off center from the wheel. You
have to replace it on the center quickly or it will go
“whop whop whop” and go all over the place.

And then you gather it up and put it on the wheel and start again.

I can understand how artists experience the process of sculpting could
be therapeutic and healing and at the same time, creative. Maybe God was molding clay as
therapy when God created those first
human beings in the Creation Story in the 2nd chapter of
Genesis.

I believe that it's important to understand the context of today's
scripture; Who was Jeremiah? What was going on at the time?
Who was he writing to?

Jeremiah was a prophet during a time of relative affluence and
prosperity. People were not aware of foreign affairs; people
were insular; smug and self-assured.

On the horizon, however, was a newly expanding empire called the
Babylonian Empire; Nebuchadnezzar was the Babylonian's
leader and general. (End of the 7th c. -605 Carchemish)

Jewish royalty: little connection with the poor; little awareness of what
was happening around them internationally.

Jeremiah represented this phenomena recorded in the O.T. in which
there was a response to the increasing power of the king; and
that response is what we call the role of the prophet.

Even the king – those in power – are not all-powerful. The prophet
spoke on God's behalf to the nation but especially to the rulers
and the elites.

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Jeremiah in preeminent fashion, fulfilled the role of the prophet.

This is what's going on – This is what God expects of you –
And if you keep on this path, this is what's going to
happen to you, and the nation.

Babylonians besieged Jerusalem for about 18 – 30 months;

Surrounded the city; starved them; then in 587-586 BC
attacked the city – and destroyed it, including its center
-- the Temple.

Devastating: All the promises and the assumptions that were held dear
from God was all questioned. The very covenant is questioned.
Embryo of modern Judaism.

So, you're probably wondering, "Scott this is nice history, but what's
this got to do with me and my life.?"

In the midst of all this destruction, we have, among other things, the
image of a potter.

A potter who doesn't get upset when the clay goes off-center and
throws the clay across the room or goes out to buy some more
clay. Rather, the potter gathers up his clay and
repositions it on the wheel and begins again.

And I think that's what God, through Jeremiah, is saying to the People
of Israel. Look, we're out of balance here. We can do better.
Let's center ourselves again.

That's what happens to me. I get off-center. I focus on one thing to
the detriment of others. I worry or obsess about something in
my life.

Sometimes we call this naval-gazing; focus on yourself; one's focus is
on one's own needs or my own pleasures over everyone else.

I'm guessing this true in your life, too.

Even before we have an awareness or consciousness about ourselves,
or about who we are, or our surroundings, God has God's
hands in that wheel, centering us, forming us, planning
for us – having these hopes for each one of us.

I'm guessing, that in God's eyes, each one of us has so much potential
– no matter how old or how young we are.

But with God's loving hands on that wheel can center us back

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Introduce Marvin & Lilli Ann Rosenberg: our landlords in Newton Centre, MA. Marvin worked with clay; Lilli was a muralist
[Marvin's vase; Lilli's Park St. station mosaic]

Both had something in common: but took broken things and made something better out of them: the image of the potter and the experience of the resurrection.

Jesus had a prophetic role to play. He spoke truth to power as prophets do. Those in power did what they could to silence this prophet from Galilee. They tortured him. They crucified and killed Jesus.

But it was out of this devastating circumstance that God was able to reach down and bring about the resurrection.

Something brand new; something that was not conceivable prior to this event -- a Messiah that saves -- not by conquering -- but by suffering.

And this idea of a potter at the wheel is not so far off from the experience of the resurrection. Here we have the God of the Universe willing to reach down and make something

brand new.