

“We are Clay Jars and God Loves Us Anyway”
Rev. Brian R. Louis, Faith Presbyterian Church, June 2, 2024

2 Cor 4:5-12

⁵For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’s sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, “Light will shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

⁷But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, ⁹persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, ¹⁰always carrying around in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. ¹¹For we who are living are always being handed over to death for Jesus’s sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death is at work in us but life in you.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word.

What do you call a good poem about clay? True pottery

I want to start with a few questions for you to ponder. These are rhetorical questions, so please, don't shout out your answers. What I do want is for you to think about these questions I pose. I'll wait a few seconds afterward to let you consider them.

How well does, or did your spouse know you? How well does your best friend know you?

What did you come up with? Does your spouse know you that well? Your best friend?

Sometimes we don't let people know the "real us," because we are afraid they might not like us, or want to be friends with us, or be in a romantic relationship with us.

Sometimes we can have secrets that can hurt a relationship with another person. Or we just hold back on letting people get to know us because we don't want to hurt them, or we don't want to get hurt. Does anyone really know us? Really?

Yes. Yes someone does. There is someone who knows us completely: God. Psalm 139 which began our scripture lessons this morning says that God knows us. The text says God has searched us and knows us. God knows everything about us. God knows our thoughts; when we sit down and stand up. The psalmist writes that God knows what we are going to say before we say it. Whenever I try to escape and run away from God, God is going to be there. I can't escape God because God is always there with me. But

the fact I cannot escape is a good thing. It shows the depth of God's love for me. God is pursuing us, waiting for us to exercise our will to welcome the Lord into our hearts and lives. God is everywhere we are. "Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there."

"For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works."

God knows us and our character better than anyone. Far better than even we do. And despite all our sin and weaknesses, God wants to be closer to us. God wants to show Godself to us, and so God sent God the Son to us, to show us God on earth in Jesus the Christ.

Sometimes, we are unkind, ungrateful, and lacking in faith. Yet God is there, staying with us, loving us, even when we are not loving God back.

Psalm 139 concludes, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any wicked^[e] way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The Psalmist pleads to God to lead them in the way everlasting. As Christians, we believe our way everlasting is in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ, in the gospel, the good news. The gospel is the treasure that Paul talks about in our second scripture lesson this morning. Paul says that we have been given the greatest treasure, the gift of the gospel. We have been given the treasure of the Christian way of life. God gives it to us, we, who are clay jars.

Back in Jesus' time, clay pots or jars were inexpensive, fragile, and prone to breaking. Lois Malcolm, a professor at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, writes that the mention of the cheap, fragile, clay jars, were a "metaphor for the vulnerability of our mortal existence."¹

The irony is striking. We have the treasure, the greatest treasure of the gospel, and we carry it, fragile, human beings.

We carry the treasure of the Gospel within us. We are not worthy to carry it, fragile as clay jars, for we are fragile humans prone to sin and always falling short of the example of Christ. We are the fragile vessels that hold this treasure. God trusts us. God trusts us to hold the treasure. God's grace gives this to us. God loves us enough to give us the treasure.

What a gift to be given the gift of the gospel. What a great thing to be grateful for. What amazing work God has done. God works with us, human beings, fallible. Even though we struggle, God lifts us through our difficulties. We the clay jars. The grace of God.

Paul was a clay jar too. Paul, before his conversion, was Saul, and he tormented Christians. After his conversion he couldn't stop spreading the good news of the healing power of Jesus Christ. He suffered greatly for it. He was a clay jar, beaten up and abused by the authorities of his day.

Even through pain and suffering Paul kept going, he kept sharing the gospel treasure.

Look at what Paul went through! His enemies stoned him, the authorities imprisoned him for his beliefs, he endured a shipwreck, all to spread the gospel. He kept going. No matter what. Paul writes in our New Testament lesson today, "We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, ⁹persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed."

Jesus puts us to work; weak, fragile, sinful people, to show the power of God. The grace of God, the light of God shined in us, so we can give the light of Christ through our compassion and love and be the testimony of Christ to the world. "For it is the God who said, "Light will shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

After worship today the congregation will vote on new elders and deacons. Even though they are like us, clay jars, they will, if you approve them, become leaders in the congregation. They have been called to serve the congregation and the Lord. Elder and deacon are ancient, sacred offices in the church, and these men and women are called to serve and help the body of Christ. They are clay jars, imperfect, but they have been called to serious jobs in the church. Being an elder or a deacon is not a casual thing, or just going to a meeting once or twice a month. It is a sacred trust. You are helping to care for and lead God's people. You are helping to lead this faithful congregation. We are imperfect human beings, we pray to God that the Holy Spirit strengthen us and help us each day, to help us lead this congregation of your faithful servants.

God has entrusted us with and given us the great gift of the gospel treasure. The sharing of the Christian way of life. The Gospel. The treasure in us, clay jars.

So, rest easy friends, even though we are all clay jars. God has given us the gift of the gospel, the treasure, the light we hold inside. The psalmist writes, "Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?" Thankfully, we cannot flee and run from God, because God is always with us, the fragile creatures he created, who God sustains and loves, more than we could ever possibly fathom. Lord, strengthen your people for your service. Amen.

[\[1\] Lois Malcolm, Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4:5-12 - Working Preacher from Luther](#)

[Seminary](#)