

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**Title: God, the Creator, and the Potter****Lesson: Jeremiah 18:1-18**

18 *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." ³ So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. ⁴ The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.*

⁵ *Then the word of the LORD came to me: ⁶ Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the LORD. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. ⁷ At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, ⁸ but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. ⁹ And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, ¹⁰ but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. ¹¹ Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the LORD: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you, from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.*

Some churches call the period from September 1 until Advent the season of Creation. Unlike Advent and Lent, it is not officially accepted by all churches. However, their observance of the season of Creation contains realistic concerns such as climate change, natural disasters, and ecosystem destruction. Churches and Christians must heed the groans of nature and the signals of crisis they send. All life created by God must be respected. To keep the season of Creation is to participate in such wisdom of life.

I have a question. There are three occupations that describe God in the Bible. Who knows them? They are potters (Jeremiah 18:6), shepherds for sheep (Psalm 23:1), and farmers (John 15:1). All pottery is made according to the will and plan of the potter. The potter breathes soul into the vessel with his skill and effort. The fate of the sheep depends on the hard work of the shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Farmers have the right to sow seeds and reap the harvest. They even plow the devastated land and reclaim it.

The description of God's occupation means that God is the absolute Sovereign of creation, providence, and judgment over the world and all creation.

Genesis starts saying: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (1:1) Therefore, the first attribute of God is the Creator. It is appropriate to describe God as a potter.

The Jeremiah text we read today is the prophecy spoken by Jeremiah. One day, God called Jeremiah to a potter's house.

"Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." (2)

There, Jeremiah sees a potter making vessels. The potter kneaded the clay to make a bowl, but the clay didn't work properly, so it didn't come out the way he wanted it to, and it was spoiled. Then the potter reworked it into another vessel.

"The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him." (4)

The clay the potter is making is not a simple substance without any will. According to the biblical parable, clay is portrayed as the potter's partner, actively doing its part according to its properties and material.

What Jeremiah saw is a scene where a potter works according to his own plans and wills on a potter's wheel. A bowl made of well-prepared clay was not molded properly. So he reworked it into a perfect vessel, which he liked.

Genesis tells us that God created humans just as a potter makes a vessel.

"Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (Gen 2:7) Just as pottery is in the hands of the potter, humans are entirely in the hands of the Creator.

Verse 6 says: "Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel."

It seems appropriate that the Bible compares the Creator's authority to a potter. Just as a potter crushes a vessel he does not like and makes a new vessel with a good purpose; God the Creator has sovereign authority over all creation. The parable of the potter shows God's sovereign authority over creation according to his own will.

The potter kneads the clay in the direction he wants. It is entirely up to the potter what shape the clay will become. But there is one principle. Creation comes with a good purpose. There is no purposeless creation. God created all of us because it seemed good to Him.

When God created the world, he repeatedly said, "It was good" (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) over and over again, and after completing everything, He said "It was very good" (Gen. 1:31). It means that God did not make us without purpose, but that He created us with good purpose, love, His will.

The vessel cannot complain against the potter who made it. There was a man named Job. He asked God when he was suffering unknown pain: "Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?" (Job 10:9)

The message of potter's parable is that God is sovereign over His people and creation. The creator God is the ruler of the world and the manager of our lives.

The process of making and baking pots and pottery by a potter is very similar to human life. Just as each vessel is crafted according to the good intentions of a potter, refined in a kiln, and used for its intended purpose throughout life, we came into this world through such a complicated process. In particular, as we were created in the image of God, we were influenced by God's disposition of 'body, mind, and soul'. Therefore, we are all very precious.

The potter makes the vessel with good intentions and purpose. Even when God created us, he created us with good intentions and purposes, so we are all special and unique. We are beings created to live good lives in God's will, and to live as blessed people. This world was created in harmony and peace for all to coexist. It is the duty and mission of Christians to preserve God's creation order and live in harmony with nature.

It is clear that God is willing to exercise sovereign authority over peoples and nations, like a potter, beyond individuals. The parable of the potter speaks of the fate of Judah and Jerusalem. Just as the potter's clay is not molded according to its purpose, the potter crushes it and reworks it, God will cancel the blessing He intended to give us if people do not follow God's plan and purpose.

“Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you, from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.” (11)

God's sovereign authority applies not only to individuals but also to peoples and nations. God's sovereign principles have the purpose of bringing the nation and individuals back to God's order and God's will. The principles are 'repentance' and 'recovery'. There are many things that go against God's creation order in our society. They sometimes come back to us with disasters such as heat waves and floods. Therefore, we must examine our lives to return to God and strive to restore our lives to the love of Christ.

Please repeat after me: our lives were created by our Creator God; our lives are precious because we were created in the image of God; our lives are meaningful with God's good purpose; thus, let's fill our lives with the word of God like gold and silver and treasure.

In the name of the Lord, I pray that God will help us to live according to His good purpose and will. Amen.