

The Potter

Once again the crowd had stopped and were thronging around the Great Teacher. Someone in the crowd struggled to get close to Him, and brought a sack that contained broken pottery pieces.

He dumped out the sack in the presence of all and said, “Teacher, this ornamental plate was a family heirloom of great value¹, and was broken by an enemy. I need you to put it back together before my family discovers its loss! Show us a sign of your power!”

Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me² to repair your supposed valuables? A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign!³”

When the man heard this, he went away sad⁴, because he was more concerned with this possession than the Kingdom of God. He walked away without reclaiming the useless pile of broken pieces.

This quieted the crowd, and in the following stillness, Christ sensed the need of another man nearby who was suffering from a broken heart. He felt compassion for him⁵ and spent some time to put the pieces of his heart back together. He continually fulfilled His mission to be gentle⁶ to the bruised souls of the world.

The group moved on after this, and as I was leaving I noticed that the discarded shards were no longer there. Instead they had been re-formed into a different shape. As a bowl it could fulfill a different and more useful purpose. Christ had not made a point of doing this, but perhaps His creative spirit could not leave it alone. Even though the clay was dried and hard, as the Master Potter He had the power to re-make it⁷. I was reminded of the reassembly of dry bones in the valley of death⁸.

The Scriptures say much about the hardening of hearts⁹ and the stiffening of necks¹⁰. But we are broken by our sin – our disobedience to God’s will¹¹ and His Supremacy¹². We are broken when the shape that we have made of ourselves does not fit God’s purpose, and we must be remade. This state is not hopeless – we are not beyond repair; it is part of the process that must be followed. And we must maintain some flexibility, too¹³, so that we are not broken again.

In the presence of Christ the broken pieces of our hearts soften and He puts them back together in the right way. His Spirit gives us our new heart (flesh now, and not stone¹⁴), and in His Presence we are strong, yet we yield to God. No one is so far gone that they are beyond help, as shown in the life of our co-worker Paul¹⁵.

As I hurried to catch up to the crowd, I thought about my own brokenness. But I also had to consider those for whom I may have had a part in breaking or at least chipping a fragment off of them¹⁶. I am sure that there were some that I did not even know about. I resolved to be more careful in the future. I was thankful for God’s healing power to fix my brokenness, and the brokenness that I have caused in others.

1. the item had a value reminiscent of the axehead in 2 Kings 6:5
2. see Luke 12:13-14
3. Matthew 12:39
4. similar to Matthew 19:22
5. Psalm 34:18

6. see Matthew 12:20 (bruised reed) and Matthew 11:29 (yoke)
7. Jeremiah 18:1-12
8. Ezekiel 37:1-14
9. see for example Ezekiel 3:7
10. see for example Jeremiah 17:23
11. see Jeremiah 23:29, God's word is "... like fire, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces
12. see Matthew 21:42-44, concerning the rejected cornerstone that will break or crush us
13. see Matthew 9:17 about the wineskins
14. Ezekiel 11:19 and Ezekiel 36:26, about replacing our heart of stone with an undivided heart of flesh
15. Acts 9
16. somewhat like a bull in a pottery shop

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