

A visit to the potter is always an interesting experience. Watching someone take raw material, in this case a slimy, viscous substance such as clay, and make it into something useful or beautiful is inspiring. It makes me think of the power of the Creator of our universe.

We are all made by Him through some incredibly complex scheme that is far beyond our ability to comprehend. But many of us take issue with how we are made, or what we have become. We act as if God did not know what He was doing – having such power, but limited by poor vision or inadequate control. We might echo the words of Isaiah, “You know nothing¹” or, “You have no skill²”. Bold words for such fragile creatures as ourselves. Perhaps we complain about being “made a little lower than the angels³ and think we deserve a higher status. Our brother Paul⁴ teaches us that our value is in whether we fulfill our purpose⁵ in whatever way we are made.

When man was created, though, God said it was Good⁶. When we sinned, we became marred and misshapen. When Jeremiah went to see the potter, he saw that the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred while it was in the potter’s hands⁷. I think it was marred by the Evil One, and the potter had to put in extra work to re-make it. Jeremiah then speaks the word of God, that because we do not fulfill His purpose for us, He has the right to break us⁸. The human potter cannot remake a broken pot, but the divine potter can (He can take a heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh⁹).

It is interesting how God worked His plan to accomplish our “re-forming” transformation, and how the potter is connected to it. When Christ was betrayed and subsequently crucified (dying so that He could re-form us), the money by which this disloyalty was gained (equivalently the “value” of Christ) was thrown to the potter¹⁰. The potter who dug clay out of his field and left it full of holes and unusable by anyone else except as a graveyard that could be bought for very little. It became where the broken pieces of what had been made were buried when they were no longer of any use. This thought echoes the insult given the Creator that was discussed earlier.

When I personally saw the potter making a pot at his wheel, I looked at the clay covering the potter’s hands and I realized how dirty those hands got in the creative process. Isaiah wrote¹¹ that we are the clay, God is the potter, and we are the work of His hands. In my mind I have an image of Christ shaping us as a potter into what God wants, but He is left with the dirt of our imperfections on His hands. We in our worship must celebrate the fact that He has dealt with that sin for us on the cross.

Our physical bodies ultimately return to the dust (or clay) from which we are made¹². But in Christ we become a new being¹³, and the clay is in a sense turned something valuable, like gold¹⁴. From our moldable and breakable past, we are made unbreakable in this our final and eternal state at home with God.

1. see Isaiah 29:16
2. see Isaiah 45:9
3. Hebrews 2:7 (quoting Psalm 8:2)
4. Romans 9:20-21
5. Ephesians 4:11
6. Genesis 1:31

7. Jeremiah 18:1-4
8. Jeremiah 19, especially vs 10
9. Ezekiel 36:26
10. see Zech 11:13 and Matthew 27:7
11. Isaiah 64:8, "Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."
12. see Job 10:9
13. 2 Corinthians 5:17
14. sort of like Lamentations 4:2 in reverse

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