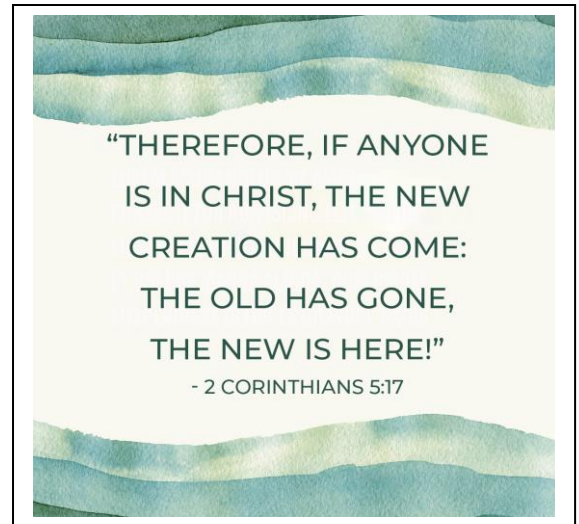


**SUNDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2021.**

**THE GOD WHO IS STILL RESTORING**

**Scripture** - Jeremiah 18:1-6

This is the final week of *The Always God* series and I hope you have enjoyed it. It's been fun exploring with you all the ways that God has moved and interacted with His people in the past and learning how He is still moving in these same ways today. You and I can experience God today.



The eternal, self-existent, all-powerful God has not changed over time. He is still "The Great I AM"...and today I want us to look at how God is:  
**Still Restoring**

**THE BLOCK TV SHOW** – I imagine many of you are familiar with the Block or any other similar programs about renovations and restorations of old properties. Of course, we are noticing more and more tension with the participants however many love the show.

The story is fairly simple. A number of older properties are identified and then couples/partners/siblings – whoever are tasked with repairing and renovating. And if you watch it weekly you get to see how the old becomes the new with the final episode revealing the winner house and then the auctions take place. It certainly gives you ideas about what you can achieve if you have the right finances and the right professionals on board.

I thought about the show this week, when reading the passage and talking about the subject we are addressing. Because the participants repair and restore broken, outdated and dilapidated homes, it's a great picture...and it's a beautiful illustration of what God does with our lives. He takes broken, marred and spoiled clay and He fashions it, forms it, molds it into something special.

In this passage God is getting Jeremiah's attention. He wants to teach him a valuable lesson about how He works in His people's lives and He does it using this real life object lesson of a potter and clay. Now, the message this object lesson communicates is pretty simple. The potter has power over the clay. And the potter works this clay, forms this clay, molds this clay to take whatever form or shape the potter desires.

The clay, in order to conform to what the potter's designing, must be worked and reworked. The lumps in the clay have to be smoothed out. Where it is "spoiled" or marred it has to be remade. This is an incredible picture of God and how He works in our lives. I want to make three simple points from this text today.

### **First Point - We are all broken.**

Our scripture refers to it as spoiled and that is what it means.

Jeremiah uses this same word in chapter 13 to describe a belt he was commanded by God to bury and later dig up. After he dug the belt up he described it as being "ruined...spoiled" and said it was "good for nothing" and useless. It was broken.

*Is there anything worse than something breaking and not fulfilling the purpose for which it was created?*

Well, we are all broken spiritually. This is what sin does to us. It corrupts us...it mars us. It breaks the relationship between God and humanity.

**Romans 3:23 – “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

Translation using Jeremiah’s term – “for all are spoiled.” And the only solution for spoiled clay is to be refashioned and remade by the potter - this is a picture of salvation. The only solution to sin, to the brokenness in our lives is the gospel. When we submit our life to the Potter’s hands, He begins to form, fashion, and make us into what 2 Cor. 5 calls, “A new creation.”

Jeremiah is a prophet. And the message he proclaimed for 40 years was one of judgment upon the people of Judah. He predicted that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians and that God’s chosen people would be carried off into exile. He’s called the weeping prophet, because the reality of what he prophesied broke his heart. It’s important to note the object lesson God gives him refers to a people God was in a covenant relationship with the people of Israel.

***Jeremiah 18:6 – “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does. declared the Lord. Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand Israel.***

The point is that once we have been remade by God and entered into a relationship with Him, that doesn’t mean we have arrived. Salvation is when God’s shaping work starts in our lives, not when it stops. And like the people of Judah over time even those of us in a relationship with God:

Can step outside of His will, choose to live in sin and disobedience and make decisions that cause lumps to form in the clay.

And it’s at that point we learn this same valuable lesson Jeremiah did - clay that is marred and broken can be reworked, remade and restored.

## **Second Point - Only God Can Restore the Broken.**

Only the potter has power over the clay. Only He has the power to rework...remake...restore. And this should bring all of us who have trusted in Jesus for forgiveness of our sins, great hope today.

Sin leads to a hardening of the heart.

***Hebrews 3: 7 and 13 tells us - hardened by deceitfulness of sin the harder the clay gets, the less moldable it becomes.***

**Play-doh** – It's like this. When you first take the Play-doh out of the can it's soft, pliable and workable. But over time as stuff gets in it, on it, and pieces of it are lost, or if you accidentally leave it out, what happens? It gets hard, brittle, not nearly as easy to work with and it is broken and unable to carry out its intended purpose.

What's true with Play-doh is true for our lives. If we don't keep our hearts soft before God and take care of our personal relationship with Jesus through abiding in Him we will become hard and brittle. If we choose to not listen to Him and embrace His word in our life, it leads to the hardening of our heart. Often, when our heart becomes the hardest, God has to break us in order to reveal to us how He can best use us.

Some listening today may be suffering from a hardened heart and the consequences it brings – leading to a place of extreme brokenness. Saying – I am afraid, I am grieving, I am depressed, I am discouraged. And today, maybe due to sin that has hardened you or a situation or circumstance that is overwhelming you, what you are screaming is, "Help, I'm broken!"

It may be a relationship has ended; or someone you love is dying; or an injury or illness is holding you back or maybe you've recently been betrayed by a loved one or friend.

Don't keep running from God; don't lose hope. You are in the right place. You are in the potter's house and God can restore that which is broken in your life...He's still restoring! It doesn't matter what you've done or how much you've failed...let the potter do what He does best and remake you into something beautiful.

There are two examples in the New Testament of Jesus restoring people.

The first was the woman caught in adultery? Do you remember this story? She came before Jesus – marred, broken and condemned. And what does Jesus do? He doesn't judge her or pick up a stone to throw at her. He looks at this woman who is at the lowest point of her life and speaks words of life to her!

***John 8:10-11 – “Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”<sup>11</sup> She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”***

He restores her in a moment of grace and shows this woman love. It's exactly how God treats all of us in our sin. He restores us, no matter WHAT we have done or how broken and messed up we are!

And what about Peter – do you remember his epic failure – denying Jesus, not once, not twice but three times, even after his firm words: “Jesus, I'll NEVER deny you! If everyone else bails on you, I won't! But

he does.

Peter is so broken, the Bible says he went out and wept bitterly. He sees Jesus after the resurrection. Can you imagine the grief, the embarrassment and shame when Peter first saw Jesus? And yet it goes unaddressed. The disciples make their way back to Galilee and Peter says – “Enough of this, I’m going fishing!” And he along with some of the other disciples get in a boat and the Bible says they catch NOTHING.

Just imagine the feeling of failure on their part. They don’t have Jesus there with them anymore and the one thing they were good at, fishing, they fail in that. For Peter, it had to be a deeper sting knowing he had denied and failed Jesus. All of the sudden as day is breaking, a man stands on the shore and asks those fishing if they caught anything.

It was here that Jesus asked a marred, spoiled, broken Peter – three times, “Do you love me?” And in gently restoring Peter, He took this pliable lump of clay and reworked him, giving him a new mission to go and “tend My sheep”.

Talk about love. He doesn’t shame Peter, He gives him a brand new mission and it was Peter that would preach at Pentecost and on that day three thousand people came to know Christ. Only God could do that!

I’m reminded of a quote by A.W. Tozer – “It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply.” This is called the “blessing of brokenness.”

***We are all broken - only God can restore the broken.***

**Third Point - God wants to restore you.**

I truly hope that you are taking this message personally. God longs to remake, remold and restore YOU. It's the loving work of a potter!  
The potter has power over the clay and pity upon the clay.

Ephesians 2 uses the word "workmanship" to describe His work in our life and it's a word that means poem! God is writing a beautiful poem with your life. Speaking of poetry I would like to finish with the words by Myra Brooks Welch –

### **The Touch of the Master's Hand.**

"Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while, to waste much time on the old violin, but held it up with a smile;

"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried, "Who'll start the bidding for me?" "A dollar, a dollar"; then two!" "Only two? Two dollars, and who'll make it three?

Three dollars, once; three dollars twice; going for three." But no, From the room, far back, a gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow;

**Then, wiping the dust from the old violin, and tightening the loose *strings*, he played a melody, pure and sweet.**

The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low, Said; "What am I bid for the old violin?" And he held it up with the bow.

A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two? Two thousand! And who'll make it three? Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice, and going and gone," said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried, "We do not quite understand What changed its worth." Swift came the reply: "The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune, and battered and scarred with sin,  
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin,  
A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine; a game - and he travels on. "  
He is going" once, and "going twice, He's going and almost gone."  
But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd never can quite understand  
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought by the touch of the  
Master's hand."

The Master...the Potter...God...can take your life – a simple lump of clay and in a moment with His touch as you remain pliable and soft in His hands, He will form you...make you...remake you...restore you into something that He can use for his glory.

That is what we see on the Block – the damaged house, in ruins. Then the plan and each room is worked on until it is remade and restored into something wonderful. And it is exciting to see the results – the before and the after pictures.

And this is how we should look at ourselves. This is how the world should look at us. God takes us...works on us...and as He does, we get so excited at what He is doing! And the watching world: our friends,



family, those at school or in the office, see how God has shaped us...how He has changed and restored us...and they say, “Who did that?!”

And we just smile and say, “The greatest Master Potter in the world and He wants to restore you today too. Will you let him?”

Dear Lord,

We have seen the damage firsthand that storms can cause in our lives. We know the destruction, aching, and devastation that they cause. If we are being honest, at times it can seem impossible that anything beautiful or good can come from such sorrows. We know within our hearts that this isn't the end of the story, that You have something far greater to come.

Father, we ask today for Your hand in our lives. We pray for the restoration of our lives by Your process. That process may not look like what we would think or plan, but we know that because You see all that is, was, and is to come...that ultimately, You will do what is most compassionate and best. Father, today we come before Your Holy throne to ask for Your restoration in our lives. We submit ourselves to Your ever-loving Will and kindness throughout.

In Jesus' name,

Amen