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THE SHAPING HANDS OF GOD

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(adapted from Rev. Thelma Chambers-Young and Dr. Stanley N. Webster)

So many times in our walks we want to be of use to God. So freely with our words we proclaim, “Use me, Lord, use me. Use me for your Kingdom” (The Beloved Community). Do we really know what we are asking for when we ask God to use us?

The Scriptures are clear that God formed man out of the dust of the earth - **Gen 2:7**; *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.*

Clay is defined in Webster’s dictionary as: an earthy material that is plastic when moist but hard when fired, that is composed mainly of fine particles of hydrous aluminum silicates and other minerals and is used for brick, tile, and pottery.

Clay is a funny state, a lot like ice almost.

Not enough dust and minerals and too much water you get MUD. Clay is used for brick, tile and pottery - all these items are building and life sustaining materials.

Clay is not the final shape; it still has to be molded shaped, dried and fired.

Humanity is like clay in God’s hands – needing to be molded, shaped, dried and fired.

Isa 64:8 - *But now, O Lord, You are our God; We are the clay, and You our potter; And we are the work of Your hand.*

When we are first saved, we are real moist and pliable, willing to do anything to serve God. The littlest things bring us joy, just knowing we are serving God. However, as we are on the wheel longer, Gods hands start to shape us by pushing and pulling and attempting to change us. We become a little more rigid. Less moist, less supple. A little harder to work with sometimes, the clay doesn’t like to be shaped. It fights back a bit and wobbles.

In fact, the clay begins to argue with the potter. Imagine clay speaking up from the

wheel and saying, “I don’t like what you’re doing, so I’m going to make different plans, I’m going to keep those plans secret, and my plans will come to pass instead of yours.” It is comparable to the clay complaining because it wanted to be a jar with handles, but the potter made it without any.

God's grace is the moisture that is applied to us to ease our stiffness. We may feel that we are being stretched out too far. At this point God’s divine and loving hands cuddle and nurture us. As we feel the warmth and love and allow God to work in our lives, the master potter’s touch finishes this work. Only God can work with this kind of clay.

In addition, if you want strong clay, you heat it to great degrees. The temperature must be so hot it burns the impurities out of the clay and creates a new bonded substance. Too much heat too fast and it cracks and falls apart. It’s a slow process, and it takes God’s great care. Sometimes the clay thinks it can’t take any more heat. Job thought he could take no more - just kill me and let me die. But God the master at shaping and molding our lives knew better.

Jeremiah 18:1-11 - the passage begins with the Lord telling the prophet to go watch a potter working clay on his wheel. As the prophet watched, the vessel “was spoiled.” So the potter shaped it into a type of vessel different from the one he was initially planning to make. The point: God has the same kind of power that the potter has. God can change what he is shaping with regard to a nation. God can have the purpose of shaping a punishing disaster for a nation because of that nation’s evil; but if that people turn, repent, and change their ways, then God will instead shape a blessing for them. Conversely, God can be planning to shape a blessing for a nation, but if that nation turns to evil, God has every right to shape a punishing disaster instead. The point is submission to the will of God.

Salem United Methodist Church is on God’s potter's wheel. That wheel is turning, and God is shaping. Salem is just like clay in the sense that God will have the final say concerning the experiences that shape us and what form we are ultimately given. But we are different from the clay in the sense that God’s shaping is in response to our obedient submission or in response to our refusal to do that. The clay on the wheel has no real will of its own; it is unconscious and inanimate. But Salem is alive. We are a corporate body of people called together by God. We are not lumps of clay. The passages of Scriptures call upon us to submit to God’s will, to obey God’s Word, to say, “yes, Lord, yes, to your will and to your way” and to God’s calling in our lives.

We must obediently step onto God's wheel, bow down there, allow God to place the potter's hands around us, shape, and mold us into all that God dreams of us being in the Kingdom (the Beloved Community) of Christ Jesus our Lord.

“Have Thine Own Way, Lord.”

Have Thine own way, Lord!

Have Thine own way!

Thou art the Potter,

I am the clay.

Mold me and make me

After Thy will,

While I am waiting,

Yielded and still.

(TIME TO REFLECT)

Reflect on the wonder and joy of God working on and in you - allow the power to make you clay in God's hands. Submit to the Potter's hand.

Let's leave our lives in God's hands. Let God shape and mold us.

You have been created by God to be a unique person - unlike any other person that has ever been created and born into this world. Realize that only God can mold and shape you into the finished person that God wants you to become. God, as our Potter, is the only one who has the full knowledge, the full power and the full means to be able to truly sanctify us to become the beautiful, godly and righteous saints.

Let us be the best earthen vessel for the cause of Christ.

Let us be His fine art work in earth.

And all of God's children say – Amen.