

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 2  
Saturday, June 1, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, June 2, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

# “Broken Jars of Clay”

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

Last week, we saw the crowd gathered for Pentecost who were “cut to the heart” by Peter’s sermon when he said, “God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” When we are called to repent, we look inward at our broken hearts. No one wants a broken heart, except for God. In Ps. 51 we hear the words of David, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” We are faced with the truth: you are dust, you are ashes, you are a jar of clay which is easily broken. And, God receives you just that way and in no other way. It is a blessing to be broken. But as Paul says, we are not “crushed” or “driven to despair” or “forsaken” by God.

Continually confronted with the death of Jesus being the only way our sins could be paid for, we come before our Lord with a broken and contrite heart. A broken heart is helpless and humble and ready to receive what God gives.

Even though God binds up our broken heart and blesses it with forgiveness, grace, and salvation, today, we look at how we remain easily breakable. St. Paul says, “You are jars of clay.” Have you noticed how the descriptions and analogies offered in the Bible all evaluate our sinful condition in the same way? You are dust. You are jars of clay.

It is only when Christ becomes part of the equation that anything changes. Then you are the “treasure hidden in the field” or the “pearl of great price” which God will give anything to possess – not that you are anything more than dust or clay, but you are the object of His love. He pours value into you.

Paul tells us, “We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” He comes with a gracious gift.

We are jars of clay standing in the presence of the Potter. We are like the flask of ointment Mary breaks and pours on Jesus on the Friday before Palm Sunday – anointing His body, preparing Him for the cross and grave. Like with your heart, it is a blessing for the vessel, for the flask of oil to be broken and poured out. Jesus tells us that everything in this life is temporary “where moth and rust destroy.” Nothing in all of creation will last. “Heaven and earth will pass away. Only My Word will remain,” Jesus says.

The Word of God is the only part of creation that is eternal. Given that the Word of God is eternal, over the years, there are some who have questioned why certain parts of the Word of God (the OT laws, in particular, no longer apply). In our Gospel reading today, we hear Jesus comment as to why we are no longer bound to the Sabbath rules of the Old Covenant which Moses wrote of in our first reading (Deut. 5). More specific explanation is given elsewhere.

I have a friend who believes that the OT rules are to still be maintained by Christians, and this has been an ongoing discussion over the past year or so. Jesus says, "I have not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it." The Moral Law, the 10 Commandments, will still be in effect after the resurrection. In eternity, God still does not want me to kill you, or have other gods, or misuse His name.

However, we have been freed from the ceremonial laws like the Sabbath laws. In Hebrews 8:13, the old covenant (the ceremonial laws) are declared "obsolete." In Mark 7:19, Jesus declares all food to be clean.

We have a new and better covenant in Christ. It is a greater treasure than the ceremonial system of the Old Covenant. That system was just a placeholder until God's promise of salvation was revealed and fulfilled in Christ.

As we have been noting over the past weeks, God's promises (even the promises attached to the Temple in Jerusalem) all of God's promises are either

eternal or fulfilled in Christ and made obsolete, because He has ushered in something better.

God's Word cannot be broken. Everything else will pass away in brokenness. I mentioned before that we are like the flask of ointment Mary breaks and pours on Jesus on the Friday before Palm Sunday. The oil Mary pours out is expensive (about a year's wages for an average worker.) That treasure is like the Word of God inside this breakable jar of clay. We have within us an unseen treasure of unspeakably immense value – God's Word of promise.

That Word of promise becomes a beautiful thing for you and me when it is connected to the crucified and risen Son of God. What Jesus did on the cross and from the grave fixes our brokenness.

It is like the lifelong cycle of dying and rising Luther speaks of in the catechism in regard to our baptismal life. Every day the Old Adam drowns and dies, and every day a new man emerges. We are broken and we are healed. You are a jar of clay. You are defined by the treasure that is within you – this surpassing power which belongs to God. Amen.