

Sermon Preached at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter  
2701 Park Road, Charlotte, NC 28209  
The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 5, 2010  
Year C, Proper 18 RCL [Jeremiah 18:1-11; Psalm 139:1-5, 13-18;  
Philemon 1-21; Luke 14:25-33]  
The Reverend Scot McComas, Supply Priest

*In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

I love the image of the Lord as the potter in our reading today from Jeremiah. God is the potter and we are the clay. God shapes us, if we let him. If you have ever made pottery, you realize you have to spin the wheel at a certain speed, get your hands dirty by holding the clay as you mold it, add water when needed for moisture so the clay won't crack, then place it in the kiln for a certain period of time to dry. Then you wait. And wait. And wait. What comes out looks shockingly different from what went in. Dirty mud goes into the kiln and a beautiful glazed piece of art comes out.

The whole process can be very onerous and is not always precise. One does not make pottery by following an exact scientific formula. It is messy and yet it can be a very creative process. It is creative in that sometimes the finished piece does not come out the way the artist intended. Sometimes the clay turns into something entirely different from what was the original concept.

So it is with life, is it not? Sometimes our lives do not turn out the way we originally intended.

*[Personal story added here. To hear, listen to audio version.]*

We know that phrase, "the best laid plans are of mice and men." Sometimes our plan is not the one God intends for us. Perhaps this may be the case with your life.

So can we allow ourselves to be molded by the potter's hand—by God's hand—and be turned into a beautiful piece of the Lord's pottery? We can or we can resist the potter's hand and break off or fall apart, like clay, refusing to be molded the way our Lord intends. In Jeremiah we read, the potter, "reworked [the clay] into another vessel, as seemed good to him." God often reworks us; he sends us in another direction. God knows what is good for us. Our job as the clay is to trust him—to trust the potter as he molds and shapes us as it "seems good to him."

That is what being faithful is about. If we were to trust God and follow his intended plan for us, we might spend less time worrying about how to be a shiny, perfectly glazed piece of pottery. We would think less about perching perfectly in a store window, luring the world to "look at me," attempting to bring attention to

ourselves. Instead we would be satisfied knowing that we were molded and cast by our Creator and that is perfection enough.

We may not be glazed flawlessly; we may have an imperfection or two here or there; we may not sit in a Fifth Avenue store window in New York City, but we can know that every part of our being has been shaped by our Lord. As our collect of the day reminds us, as the clay, we are to trust God, our potter—trust him with all our hearts and not to “confide in our own strength” but in that of the Lord.

Each of us is a messy, dirty, moldy piece of clay, but we also are an impeccable, ultimate, beautiful piece of art, glazed to perfection by the love of God through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.