

# THE PROPHETIC WORD TODAY

## God's Word at the Potter's House

Text: Jer. 18-19

### INTRODUCTION:

Twenty-one years is a long time.

In twenty-one years a baby boy is transformed into a man.

In twenty-one years a little girl becomes a woman, old enough to have children of her own.

In twenty-one years a person can move from Kindergarten to a Ph.D.

In twenty-one years whole nations have time to rise and fall.

Twenty-one years is a long time, but it did not seem that way to Jeremiah.

God had called Jeremiah twenty-one years before to deliver His word of warning to Judah that if they did not repent and turn back to God, the judgment of the Lord would fall upon them. Throughout those twenty-one years, Jeremiah had faithfully declared that message, but nothing had changed. The people's hearts had not turned back to God, and God had not sent His judgment.

Not that Jeremiah wanted Him to do so. Far from being resentful or vengeful, Jeremiah's soul was in anguish at the people's refusal to listen to the Word of the Lord. Jeremiah cried out,

**Jer. 9:1 Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!**

Jeremiah did not just weep for the nation as a whole; he wept for individuals, people he knew, men and women with faces and names: Absalom, Jacob, Rachel. What was to happen to them? What was God doing in their lives?

In the Scriptures, we find that God spoke in many different ways to people. He spoke to Moses out of thunder and to Elijah in a still small voice. He appeared to Abraham as a man on a journey and to Gideon as an angel. He showed Himself to Joshua as The Captain of the Lord's Army and to Ezekiel as a wheel within a wheel.

But to Jeremiah on this day, God said, "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words." The first three messages God sent through the portal of Jeremiah's eyes. The final one, He spoke. The first three, you may well remember. The fourth, many of you have never heard.

The first message God sent through what Jeremiah saw was

### **I. “HE WAS MAKING SOMETHING AT THE WHEEL.”**

It did not take long for Jeremiah to get God’s message. He is the potter. Judah was the clay in His hands; but not just Judah, the people of Judah. Each individual was as clay in the hands of the potter. As Jeremiah watched, he noticed two things.

#### **A. It was the potter who purposed what the clay would become.**

After all, it was God who took the dust of the ground and formed us, breathing into us the breath of life.

With the same lump of clay, the potter could make

1. a cup
2. a pot
3. or a vase

The potter made the determination according to his wisdom and desire.

And so it is with the lives of men and women in the hands of the Master Potter. He makes one a laborer, another a manager, another a soldier, another a teacher, each to fulfill the purpose of the Maker to bring Him glory and to fellowship with their Creator forever.

But Jeremiah also noticed

#### **B. For the vessel to be made, the clay had to be in the center of the wheel.**

If the clay is off of the center, the vessel being formed would wobble and could not be shaped into what it was designed to be.

“Oh,” Jeremiah thought. “So like our nation and so like its people.” God has His purpose for each one. He would mold them and shape them to be what He desires, but they refuse to remain in the center of His will.

Centering the clay on the wheel requires a fixed standard. If the hands molding the pot move with each gyration of the clay, the clay remains out of the center. A fixed standard, pushes the clay where it is out of alignment without marring the parts that are as they should be.

As men and women and boys and girls allow their lives to be molded by the fixed standard of God’s Word, their lives are moved to the center of God’s will where He can shape them into what He has purposed them to become.

But then God sent through Jeremiah's seeing the second message.

## II. "THE VESSEL WAS MARRED IN THE HAND OF THE POTTER."

We are not told what spoiled the vessel as the potter was molding it.

Potters tell us it could be one of three things:

- A. The clay got off of the center of the wheel as we just discussed.
- B. Some impurity was discovered in the clay.  
It might be just a tiny stone, but as the clay turned in the hands of the potter, the craftsman felt its rough edge. Plucking it out spoiled the vessel, but leaving it in would cause it to explode when later it was put into the kiln to cure. At that point, the impurity would not only destroy the one vessel, but all the others in the furnace at the same time.
- C. Unyielding clay.  
Some clay is stubborn, unyielding to the touch, even to the pressure of the potter's hands. As such, it cannot be perfectly molded into the contours needed to fulfill the design and purpose of the potter.

Jeremiah saw the message clearly enough. He thought of people he knew whose lives were obviously not what God intended or wanted.

1. **Some had impurities in their life.** Some were outward sins everybody noticed, and some were inward ones which only they and God were privy to; but both kinds ruined the vessel.
2. **Many were just plain stubborn like unyielding clay.** They were set in their ways and unwilling to submit to the desires and plan of the God who made them. Even though He purposed nothing but good for them, they were set to do things their own way rather than His.
3. **Some of them were simply out of the center of God's will.** It wasn't some great sin or even overt stubbornness; it was a casualness about life. There was a lack of intentionality, like all that was important in life was eating, sleeping, being comfortable, and seeking pleasure. There was simply no attempt to even discover the purpose for which they had been made.

These three things, Jeremiah saw all about him in the lives of people everywhere. The vessels were marred in the hands of the potter. Jeremiah thought, now they must be trashed. They are ruined, so they must be thrown away.

He was surprised by the next message He saw.

## III. "HE MADE IT AGAIN."

Rather than throw the ruined vessel away, the potter began to make the vessel over again, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

Jeremiah's heavy heart gladdened. That is what God has been desiring to do. That is why He sent me to preach repentance. Because even though the vessel of the nation of Judah has been ruined by stubbornness and impurity, if "my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land."

And Jeremiah thought, "And also individuals. Though their lives be ruined to this point, if they will repent of their impurity, get back in the center of God's will, and yield to His molding touch, God is forgiving and gracious, and He will yet make them into what He has purposed them to be.

And so Jeremiah continued to preach. As he warned of God's coming judgment if the people of Judah continued their sin unabated, he also held forth the truth that the Lord was the God of a second chance. That though they had sinned, God would forgive if they would just repent and yield to Him.

But the people would not repent, and they stubbornly refused to yield to God's guiding hand. One by one they said to Jeremiah,

**Jeremiah 18:12 ... "... we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart."**

So, God sent one more word through the potter. He told Jeremiah to pick up a flask that the potter had made on some previous occasion. This one had already been fired and so was past the point of further molding and shaping. It's form was fixed.

God told Jeremiah to carry the flask to the Valley of Hinnom and to bring with him some of the elders of Judah. This valley to the south of the City of David was well known for its dark history. Before King Josiah, it had been the site of all kinds of pagan abominations, including the sacrifice of children to Molech. During the revival of Josiah, the pagan idols and altars had been destroyed and burned. Ashes from other pagan sites were brought into the valley and dumped. In fact, the place had become a dump, and even in Jeremiah's day, unending underground fires kept smoke rising from its heaps. Looking to the bottom from the city walls was like gazing into the edges of hell.

Then God said to the leaders of the land through His prophet. Because you would not repent and would not yield, to allow me to mold you into that beautiful vessel I purposed you to be, Jerusalem shall become like this valley, and you like this flask.

And God said to Jeremiah,

#### IV. **“BREAK THE FLASK.”**

This is the message from the potter`s house with which few people reckon. Great is our comfort that though our lives be marred by sin and rebellion that God will give us a second chance and more. Who is not rightly soothed that the Lord is full of grace and mercy, and if we will crawl back up on the wheel of His providence that He will spin us again, and yielding, we can be made into another vessel as it seems good for the Master Potter to do.

But the final word God sent to Jeremiah and to us is frightening and should be sobering. There is a limit to God`s patience. There comes a time when the heart of a man, the soul of a woman, is fixed; and that time often comes before death. All of the leaders who stood by Jeremiah when he broke the flask at the commandment of God were still breathing. Some of them would live for decades to come. But they had stretched God`s patience too far. They presumed too long on the mercy of God, and they were suddenly broken upon the anvil of His righteousness.

#### PRAYER

Lord, may we see more clearly than ever before that you are the Master Potter and we no more than clay. We exist because You have made us, and it is for You alone to determine how best we may glorify and serve You.

And Lord, we confessed that we are all vessels that have been marred in the hands of the potter. None of us is unscarred by sin. We have all fallen short of what You designed us to be.

And God, we thank You that You allow us the opportunity to repent and You are willing to mold us again to make us according to Your desire.

But Lord, I pray that today an icy fear would grip the heart of those who have refused to repent. I pray that the words of the Lord Jesus would reverberate in our heart, “unless you repent, you will all perish.” I pray we would put an end to our testing the patience of the Almighty. I pray that we would cease from our careless presumption on Your tender mercies. I pray that stubbornness will end and repentance will come at Your altar today.