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Reflection for September 4, 2022 – God Re-Make me, Please! Based on Jeremiah 18:1-11

That's not what I had in mind. That didn't work out the way I had planned. What a huge disappointment, I'm shattered, bruised, defeated, and demoralized. Can I start again.? I don't know whether or not I can cope. Do I have the will to go on?

On occasions like that it would be nice wouldn't it if we could simply be like the potter and crumple the clay back into a ball, kneed it again, put it back on the wheel and turn that lump of clay into something beautiful.

Jeremiah suggests God has that authority, that power to make everything new again. God can even "pull up a people or a country by the roots and get rid of them," if they are wicked, if God so chooses. But if they repent, Creator God might think twice and start again, planting a new people and a country.

To Jerimiah and other biblical prophets, repentance is the key. Repent, change your behaviour and you will be spared or receive some sort of reward. Life will be restored. In death, a banquet laid before you. Peace, rest, new life in Holy Arms is promised. There are dire consequences otherwise.

Now, I don't think you will be surprised if I express that I'm not a believer in the literal "dire consequences" interpretation of this passage. The God that I know is not punitive or disciplinary. But I do wonder if God does threaten to re-make me, you.? I hope so, I pray that it be so!

I pray that I can be re-formed as the potter reforms his work on the potter's wheel. I hope that I can be remade again and again as I grow beneath the great lover's hands as her wisdom prods and guides me. That is what God intends. It is what Yahweh intended during Jeremiah's time. Not that the people of Israel should be faced with an ultimatum, but that they should know, if they believed in God, they needed to change. That is a consequence of God's hand, you can't believe and stay the same. The Holy Spirit will change you, no ifs ands or buts. In reality I suppose that is not so much a threat as it is a promise. And what a glorious promise that is!

God, the master potter, reshapes, renews, repurposes, revitalizes rejuvenates and remakes us all the time. Our bodies are stricken down, bent, and broken. They rise again with the aid of heavenly crutches to meet a new challenge as best we can. Our minds, preoccupied with worry, filled with apprehension, and riddled in doubt are liberated; a voice says, come to me and I will give you rest. Spirits depleted, energy drained, hope lost, in anxiousness and in grief, the clay of our being falls to pieces. But somehow, bit by bit, our brokenness is knitted back together in God's hands. Be still and know that I am God, and that I am with you to mend and heal.

I recall being a first-year student at the Centre for Christian Studies. Among the many comments from program staff, one really stands out for me as I reflect on the scripture for today. "Be prepared to be changed." "You will not leave this program the same person you were when you came in." And they also said, "It might take time for people close to you to adjust and understand the changed you."

That and more has been true. During my "transformation" if I can call it that, I moved from considerable doubt (could I really do this?), to a reassured disciple, (I think I just might be able to do this)! Barriers to my understanding God in the world were broken down and new visions of the Creator's love emerged. I became excited about engaging with Holy Mystery and filled with awe when I did. Apprehension gave way to confidence. I began to feel a new kind of belonging,

While I expect this was challenging work for God to do, God the potter was doing something new, reforming and making a different one.

We all of course know the story of the apostle Paul. As Saul, a cruel, tyrant and an anti-Christian if ever there was one. He was a zealot and a persecutor of the Jews. But God had another plan and would strike Saul down on a lonely country road. After a blinding light receded, the master potter's work had begun again. Saul became Paul and would travel thousands of miles from Rome, through the Middle East, Asia and Greece spreading the gospel and advocating Christ's life and his messianic message.

I have a vision of both Paul and I as living clay. Held in the hands of God's creating presence, we were plied and pulled, stretched, and restructured. Our malleable persona remolded and reformed. Something new emerged.

Something new was what Jeremiah was speaking to the people of Israel about, long before Jesus would walk the earth. ***"Can't I do just as this potter does, people of Israel?" GOD'S Decree! "Watch this potter. In the same way that this potter works his clay, I work on you, people of Israel.***

Some listened to Jeremiah's teaching, allowing themselves to see God again and anew. They would ask Yahweh to lead them in truth and away from corruption and selfishness. They would be receptive to the potter's hand in their lives. They would be renewed in faith and hope. New vessels would emerge eager to embark towards a path of righteous living.

But what of the people of Jerusalem and kingdom of Judah itself? Jeremiah is speaking to a wider audience than the individual. The Divine Potter also speaks not just to us individually, but humanity collectively, a nation, nations.

As we grow and fall in love with God more deeply, we transform into instruments of hope, peace and justice in the world. We shift and adjust. We are reshaped within our experiences. We move forward, sometimes battered and bruised, but miraculously we become more determined. Individually remade through our own disappointments, our losses and perhaps even our grievances, we rise again reassured.

In community the potter is at work once more. This time she is reforming relationships. This time he is answering the grieving, rebuilding hope. Holy Love answers the calls of all who are desperate and lost; all who may be broken. Fragments of lives are put back together and an opportunity for healing emerges. And that happens only through a community of believers who have been shaped by God's hands.

In Jeremiah, words spoken conveyed a hope that God the potter would "re-form" a people, bringing lost sheep back into the fold. Today those words remind us that we too need to be constantly "re-formed," "re-made" in our discipleship. To accomplish that requires an openness to being placed back on the wheel and leaving the rest up to God.

None of us will be the same after we have spun around on the potter's wheel and have been touched by the creator's hands. We won't be the same when we jump off, because people will notice.

That's a good thing. Because people will notice your kindness, generosity, perseverance, integrity, patience, forgiveness and of course your unconditional love. And with any luck that will spread to others you meet along your journey. That is the essence of Kingdom living.

Let us be open to the gift the Holy Potter has to give us, and through our remaking, continue to meet head on the challenges being in ministry together requires.

Thanks for listening this morning, Amen