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SERMON TITLE: The Craft of the Master Potter, Part 1
The Life & Times of Jeremiah
SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 18:1-12
DATE: November 10, 2019
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read also 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Jake out your stewardship card and let's take a look at the verse on it. Let's review the surrounding passage so that we can see stewardship in God's eyes. I am going to highlight the work of people—you and me—and the work of God:

*A farmer who plants . . . must each decide in your heart how much to give. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully. And God will generously provide. They share freely and give generously . . . Their good deeds will be remembered. For God is the one who provides seed and then bread. . . . He will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. . . . You will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. . . . When we take your gifts to those who need them, **THEY WILL THANK GOD.***

Do you see the two components of stewardship? There's the steward—the one who is given the responsibility of caring for the money or thing of value. That's YOU! And then there is the owner who oversees and protects the thing considered worth preserving, and ensures your success. That's GOD!

You are a steward over non-material and material things.

- Non-material things: your attitude, relationships, ethics, worship, morals
- Material things: your body, money, possessions

You are the steward of yourself and your possession, not the owner. Who is the owner? The One who created you.

Let's think about it. God thinks you are worth investing in.

- God delights to partner with you.
- God loves to be generous.
- If God sees generosity in you, God will be generous to you.

That's a pretty good deal. Good stewardship blesses you! It also helps people everywhere to thank God.

When you do something really nice to help someone or you forgive or you have grace toward them or you give monetarily, **THEY THANK GOD FOR YOU!**

Now doesn't that feel good? **Nothing feels better than to be a blessing.**

This week I went downtown to represent Duncanville Outreach Ministry at the Dallas Morning News. When leaving the building, a woman was standing in the street, bent over a wheelchair, unable to move. My friend and I tried to get her to move to the sidewalk but she couldn't. We were unable to move her. Cars were whizzing by. A young man came along. He held her up while we moved the wheelchair behind her and he moved her so she could sit down. He then wheeled her to the sidewalk out of harm's way. Then he went on. We thanked God for him.

To be a steward means the Owner has the right to shape you. It is a collaboration with you. Stewardship covers money, possessions, your body, your attitude, relationships, ethics, morals and worship.

- When you are gracious, it blesses you and the one you have grace toward.
- When you are honest, it blesses you and the rest of your world.
- When you give a tithe, it blesses the world with the presence of this active church.

When you steward your life in any arena, you will receive God's favor and the world will be thankful to God.

It is a dynamic privilege to participate with our Creator in giving to this world.

Let's turn now to Jeremiah to understand the foundation of this two-component stewardship. Jeremiah is a disciple, just like you. He is learning about God through all these experiences because God teaches him first. God constantly tells us what God wants God's creation to be and do. Hear the story. READ Jeremiah 18:1-12

God sent Jeremiah down to the potter's house to experience this lesson. Every town had a potter's shop—pottery changed the shape of life by allowing people to have something in which to store leftovers! (or anything). No longer was life hand-to-mouth. People had pots to put meals in.

Walk through your kitchen. Take a look at bowls, pots, jars, saucepans, dishpans, cups, buckets, jugs, barrels, boxes, things that hold things. You cannot imagine life without them.

Before, people wandered to find food, and life was reduced to what could be used in a day for survival. The invention of pottery revolutionized life. Now they could store.

So when God tells Jeremiah to go to the potter's house, it was the most important business in the community.

If we knew nothing about pottery-making and Jennifer tried to tell us what she does only with words, it would be hard to get the concept by seeing the finished product. But a lot goes into making pots. Watch her spin the wheel to create what is in her mind.¹

She brought a variety of pots she made—and the pots probably did not miraculously appear in just the shape she wanted. She bought the clay. She owns the wheel. She is doing the shaping. It is her prerogative to crush it down if she is not satisfied.

God sent Jeremiah to the potter's shop but when he got there, the potter was crushing down the pot he was making.

The Lord said, "As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand." (v. 6)

This is the craft of the Master Potter.

That pot you see being molded does not have a mind of its own but the clay is responsive to the Master's hand. It cannot talk back to the Master and insist on its shape. No, the Master determines the shape. Thus the clay acts as an instrument subject to the Master's authority, for only the Master has in mind the outcome.

Imagine that clay rising up and resisting. Jennifer says it does that! It comes alive sometimes—like a toy in a Disney movie. But The Master Artist has full control.

Jennifer explains, "Clay can spin out of control on a wheel. So the Master has to keep a strong hand on it to stabilize it and tell it where to go and shape it into what it will become. He adds "living water" to help it conform. Sometimes the Master must begin again."

This is true of all creators.

Consider The Blue Boy painting which hangs in Huntington Library. X-rays reveal underneath the final painting earlier attempts. Under Blue Boy was an incomplete older man. The canvas had been cut down. A dog sat at his feet. But the final painting has no dog, a boy and was lengthened to show his feet.²

The creator has the prerogative to change, transform, or discard his work. Pablo Picasso reworked one of his earliest paintings thirteen times.³

It is the prerogative of the owner and creator of the work to redo it according to their will. God has this right and God has the right to destroy or not destroy God's works.

But notice that the "works" of God, people and nations enjoy the prospect of corroborative work because you are the steward.

You enjoy an owner-steward relationship. That's amazing! This can begin at any time.

As God's steward, imagine the blessing that comes to the world when you give.

When you give your tithe, God uses you to

- employ staff to minister to the body;
- to have a building to hold worship;
- pay the church's bills;
- to support missionaries in their work around the world;
- to minister to the community through Duncanville Outreach Ministry;
- to start a pray ministry for the city;
- to share the word and worship publically;

When you give as you see need among your family and friends

- you help them see God
- you give them hope
- you help them thank God

When you practice good ethics and morality

- you are a witness to goodness
- you are respected by others
- you give Christ's church a good name.

Every time you give, God gives to you to make your gift his "signature gift."

If you haven't seen yourself as God's handiwork and you as God's steward, you can begin at any time. Consider a full-hearted new commitment and BE BLESSED.

AMEN

¹ You can see her working during the sermon at www.fpcd.org. Click on 11/10/19, The Craft of the Master Potter. You can see her pots by visiting First Presbyterian.

² Conservation Exhibition to Reveal the Mysteries of 'Blue Boy' 'The Blue Boy' (ca. 1770) Thomas Gainsborough at Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Marino, Calif. See <http://www.artfixdaily.com/artwire/release/1845-conservation-exhibition-to-reveal-the-mysteries-of-blue-boy>, accessed November 5, 2019.

³ Pablo Picasso, *La Soupe* (1902–03), Art Gallery of Ontario. See <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/picasso-secrets-x-ray-1297568>, accessed November 5, 2019.