

Theme: **God's is with us as our Potter**

Text: Isaiah 64:1-9

Occasion: 1st Wednesday of Advent

Date: November 28, 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, Co

*Grace and peace to you as you learn how God is with you, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

I hope that all of you know what this is? (*Show everyone the clay pot.*) Yes, it's a plain clay pot. What do you think you might find in a clay pot like this? Do you think you might find a great treasure in this pot? Probably not. People put treasures in fancy containers. Yet it is true that as Jesus' followers, we have a treasure in us. It is the treasure of forgiveness and the promise of heaven that God gives us as a gift because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. But we are not fancy treasure chests. The Apostle Paul says we are "**common clay pots.**" Still we are very special clay pots. We do have a treasure in us—Jesus and the Good News about what He has done for us is our treasure. God's miracle is that even in us, even in people as common and plain as we might be, we carry the light of God in us, a light that can bring Jesus to those around us and heal them. So we don't keep the treasure in us. (Put the Aloe Vera Plant in pot.) But God gives us life and we give that life to those around us, so that they will know that it is not our treasure we offer, but God's. Kind of like this Aloe Vera plant, it has something to give to us for healing, but it was given to it by God.

Once there was a rather remarkable woman named Elouise. What made Elouise different was that she glowed with the joy of her faith. While others talked about their religion, Elouise lived her faith. While others complained about other people and the weather, Elouise anticipated tomorrow and looked toward to a bright future. While others planned programs and fussed about the operation of the congregation, Elouise went about teaching and comforting and supporting others.

The strangest thing happened. The more Elouise served, the more she seemed to glow. The more she did something for others, the more a strange kind of light seemed to come from her. It got brighter and brighter with each passing day as she shared God's love to others.

Soon Elouise's glow was so bright that it kind of hurt people's eyes to be around her. Her light was so different from what people were used to. Most people made their own kind of portable light that shines on themselves so that others could see and admire them. But

Elouise's light didn't shine on her at all. It shone from her and lit those around her. And it was so bright that it showed every blemish and fault, every age spot and scar, every imperfection that they had. Over time, Elouise became very unpopular indeed. At least to some, to some who loved the darkness of their own light, that is.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," Elouise would say. "For every person who hides from the light, another finds the way by the light. Perhaps some are tired of trying to make their own light or tired of trying to stand in the twilight of their own goodness. Perhaps they have found the darkness too deep and too frightening. Here they find the way—not mine—it is not my light—but God's light."

Of course, Elouise's story is a parable. We do not actually glow when we do the good that God would have us do. Let's face it, we could never manage our lives if we glowed with the good that we were able to do through God's love. It would not be long before we would begin to compare ourselves with each other. "I'm not as bright as I could be," we would say to ourselves, "But at least I am brighter than that other guy who calls himself a Christian." And soon we would be in a brightness contest, trying to be the brightest and best so that others would admire us. But that's not the way the story goes. Elouise glowed with God's goodness working in her life. She did not make the light. She couldn't, neither can we.

Indeed, God has made us to live our faith. He has shaped us, like a potter shapes a piece of clay, to be the followers of Jesus we were meant to be. But no matter how you measure it, we are not treasures. We note what the Apostle Paul said, "**We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us**" (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV). "Jars of clay" or common clay pots—not very glamorous, is it? Not very notable, for we are not even able to argue with the Potter about what kind of pot we want to be. But pots we are, God's pots, shaped by His hand, made according to His will.

And God doesn't want us to remain empty. Empty is our natural state. And we can work very hard to put something of meaning in ourselves. But for all our work and will, we end up with a pot full of nothing. Isaiah says it this way: "**All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags**" (Isaiah 64:6 NIV). That's the best we can do. That empty space in the pot that we are, we cannot fill ourselves with anything of

value, only God can do that.

Yet God has made each of us to be carriers of His gifts. Though we cannot fill ourselves with anything, God in Christ seeks to fill us with treasures, unearthly treasures. Treasures we cannot create or sustain. Again as the Apostle Paul says: **“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us”** (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV). Indeed we are common clay pots. We have nothing of value in ourselves, but we have an unearthly treasure in us. A glowing, miraculous, wondrous, treasure—a treasure that we have the privilege of offering to all those around us, especially to those who are still empty, broken and lost in the darkness of this world. The treasure is Jesus Christ. He is the gift that God offers and amazingly He dwells in us. The Apostle Paul reminds us: **“Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the Word of life”** (Philippians 2:15b-16 NIV).

We are shaped by the hand of God, created by Him and redeemed by Jesus Christ for the purpose of offering God’s treasures—forgiveness, love and life. What an amazing gift we have to offer others! It’s God’s Christmas gift that will last forever.

The story is told about the mother who took her young son to visit a great cathedral. The lad looked around in amazement. “Mother, who are those people in the windows all around us?” “They are God’s saints,” she replied. “I get it,” he said. “Saints are people who let the light of God shine through them.”

We are God’s saints, redeemed by Jesus Christ, shaped by the hands of God, filled with the Spirit so that the light of God’s grace can shine through us and light all those who remain in darkness. We are God’s stars lighting up the sky. So go and let God’s light shine through you, so others may find the way to true life. Amen.