

Judgment and Promise:

God Speaks through the Prophet Jeremiah, #5

**“The Rights of the Potter
And the Responsibility of the Clay”**

Jer. 18

--CEFC 2/14/21; 11/12/95

Last week we talked about the problem of idolatry.

The Bible defines idolatry as the worship of the creature rather than the Creator.

giving something in creation a preeminence

that it was never meant to have.

It is making something that is less than ultimate supreme in our lives—

as the source of our identity, our security, and our significance.

Idolatry involves exchanging the truth of God for a lie,

for an idol is a false god;

But idolatry can take another form—

Not only is it the worship of a false god;

it can also be the worship of the true God using images.

Think of the second of the Ten Commandments:

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything

in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them;” (Ex. 20:4-5).

You are not to worship the true God using the form of a bull or a lion

or the sun and the stars.

For nothing in creation can capture the fullness of the God who is beyond creation—
whether in his power and majesty, or in his love and mercy.

Nothing in this world can convey the utter holiness of the Lord of hosts.

We can't worship the true God—the maker of heaven and hearth,
using images (even mental images) of our own making.

But this raises the question--

How then are we to think of God?

How can we possibly conceive in our minds what he's like?

He is the infinite Creator;

we are finite creatures.

He is invisible spirit;

we are tangible flesh.

He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent--

all-powerful, all-knowing and always existing everywhere--

we are limited in strength, in knowledge,

confined in space and time.

How are we even to imagine such a being?

Fundamentally, we must think of God as he has revealed himself to us.

We are not free to think of God however we like—

we are bound to receive what he has revealed in his Word.

But how does the Bible reveal God to us?

There are two ways the Bible allows us to think and talk about God rightly,
and the two go together.

The first is the way of negation--

The Bible points us to all the things that limit us as human beings--
and then deny them of God.

We have certain needs that must be fulfilled to sustain us--

the Bible affirms that God is without need.

Our sacrifices don't fulfill some need of God—

He has no need to eat the flesh of bulls or the blood of goats.

We can't know what the future holds,

nor can we understand all the mysteries of the universe--

We deny that limitation of God.

He is infinite in power and knowledge,

without limits in space and time.

Isa. 40:14—"Who was it that taught [the LORD] knowledge,

or showed him the path of understanding?"

The Bible says he knows the end from the beginning,

he is eternal.

The way of negation doesn't say much positive about God,

He can become no more than just a "Higher Power."

But it does keep us from bringing God down to our level. /

The second way the Bible enables us to think about God is by way of analogy.

The Bible begins with something that we know from human experience
and then it affirms that God is like that in some way.

We see this all the time--

Ps. 18:2-- “**The Lord is my rock and my fortress**”

In this metaphor, God is a point of stability and a sure foundation for life--
like a rock.
He provides safety and protection-- like a fortress.

The objects that are used for comparison are rich and varied.

God is a shepherd
who leads his flock into green pastures and beside quiet waters.

In one place, God is compared to a mother hen
who gathers her chicks under her wings as a place of security.

Frequently we see God as a King who rules over the earth with great power.

And in the metaphor closest to the heart of Jesus--

God is pictured for us as a Father who protects and provides,
and loves and forgives,
and to whom we owe loving obedience.

Such figures of speech are necessary to convey to us
something of God’s personal nature--

Each metaphor has its limitations, of course,
and to rely on only one runs the risk of creating a false image of God--

a mental idol.

That's why we need them all,
as together they help to shape our understanding of God
and our relationship to him. /

This morning we want to explore another metaphor
that conveys to us something of the character of God.
It is the metaphor that the prophet Jeremiah is most famous for.
It is the picture of God as a Potter.

Jer. 18:1--"This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:

'Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.'

So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel."

A potter working at his wheel was a common sight in the ancient world--
for pottery of one type or another was widely used for all sorts of things--
for cooking, for eating and drinking,
and for storing food and water and wine,
and even as a place to keep sacred scrolls.

Pieces of broken pottery, or sherds as they are called,
are perhaps the most common artifacts found by archaeologists
who uncover ancient cultures.

They have found pieces of pottery believed to be over 7000 years old.
And the technique of potters hasn't changed all that much--
Even today you can see potters mold the clay with their hands
as they sit at their wheel.

Jeremiah observes the potter and notices in v. 4 that

“the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands.”

Perhaps there was some imperfection in the clay

that prevented it from being molded in the right way

for the stem of a vase or the lip of a cup.

Whatever the cause, the potter makes an adjustment—

he changes his plans.

“So the potter formed it into another pot,

shaping it as seemed best to him.”

Here is the metaphor—a potter at his wheel.

So what’s the point?

What is the aspect of the analogy that reveals some truth about God?

v. 5--“Then the word of the Lord came to me:

‘Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?’ declares the Lord.

‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.’ //

God as the potter--

shaping the clay as seems best to him.

The metaphor, this picture of God, is used in the Bible

to stress God’s sovereignty as Creator,

shaping the destiny of whole nations.

And this metaphor humbles us.

It puts us in our place.

You see this emphasis when this image is used in Isaiah, for example--

Isa. 29:16--the prophet rebukes the people for thinking they are above God--

“You turn things upside down,

as if the potter were thought to be like the clay!

Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it,

‘You did not make me’?

Can the pot say to the potter,

‘You know nothing’?”

Just remember, the potter is in control—he calls the shots.

He has the freedom to mold the clay as he sees fit.

Paul picks up this thought in his letter to the Romans,

responding to the objection that the way God deals with us seems unfair.

“But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God?” he asks.

“Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it,

‘Why did you make me like this?’

Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay

some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?” (9:20-21).

God is the potter, we are the clay.

And we dare not forget it.

This image really goes back to the beginning,

when in Gen. 2:7 we read that God **“formed”** man from the dust of the ground,

the Hebrew uses the same verb that is used for the work of a “potter.”¹

Genesis 2 pictures God as the potter,

crafting Adam from the dust for his purpose.

And that same description applies to all of us--

Is. 64:8—“**We are the clay, you are the potter;**

we are all the work of your hand.”

God is the potter—

He made us—so we all belong to him.

God is the Creator of all that exists--

he is the craftsman who brought the entire universe into being--

by whatever means and in whatever span of time he deemed appropriate--

God is the potter, and we are the clay./

So what are we to make of this metaphor, this analogy, used to describe God?

First, whether you believe there is a potter--a Creator--or not

has enormous implications for your view of the world.

For only if there is a Creator, some intelligent mind behind this natural world,

can there be any purpose, or meaning to it all.

Otherwise, it is just an impersonal collection of atoms and energy

randomly interacting with no rhyme or reason--

¹ rjExwø¥y

we may discover some physical cause,
but there can be no personal purpose.

There can be no end, no goal, no telos, in view
for our human existence.

Without that divine design,

all our moral notions are just the inventions of our own minds—
they are simply culturally constructed.

There is no ultimate moral truth, no real right and wrong,
and there is no ultimate moral accountability--
no justice in any cosmic sense.

Our moral judgements become mere emotional preferences
flowing out of our own inner desires.

Without a Creator we are lost in the cosmos.

And that notion of creation

is sanctioned by our national founding document--

for didn't Thomas Jefferson write that "we hold these truths to be self-evident--

That we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights."

Without that Creator,

we have to ask what will happen to those rights.

God is the Potter--

the craftsman who brought us into being for his good purpose.

But more than that, he is the craftsman who has a hands-on involvement

in all that takes place in the wide scope of the universe

and in the intimate details of our lives.

'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.' . . .

Can I not do with you as this potter does?"

Here is a call to bow before God's sovereign power and divine rule in our lives.

It is the lesson Job learned, isn't it--

he couldn't understand what God was allowing to happen in his life.

But then, he couldn't understand the mysteries

of God's work in the rest of creation either.

He was like a mere lump of clay

in the hands of the great and mighty God of heaven and earth.

Should you expect to understand what God is up to?

The picture of God as the Potter calls us to bow before his sovereign rule

and to accept what he has done in making us as we are

and putting us where we are.

There is a "given-ness" to life, isn't there--

there all sorts of things that we have absolutely no control over.

In some ways we are simply thrown into this world--

We have no choice as to the specific time that we are to be born--

Why should we live in the 21st century instead of the 10th?

And we have no choice as to the specific place that we are born.

Why should most of us be born here in America rather than Timbuktu?

None of us chose our parents.

None of us had anything to do with our essential genetic makeup--
that information that determines the color of our eyes and our height
and even a lot about our personality.

There is more there than we may ever know.

The truth is, you've got to play with the hand you're dealt.

He is the potter—we are the clay.

There's no use complaining--

Does the pot say to the potter, "Why did you make me this way?"

That may seem harsh,

but in fact, it can be liberating.

For you are who you are,

not because of the chance interaction of atoms

in the random process of genetic formation.

You are who you are through the sovereign craftsmanship of a loving God.

For the potter metaphor doesn't stand alone in the Bible--

it has to be understood alongside of the notion of God as our gracious Father.

Those who know him in that way through Jesus his Son

need not be afraid of him as the Sovereign Lord of creation.

It is a great encouragement to know that God has formed you

at just this place and time

and in just this way

so that you can play just the role he has for you

in his eternal plan.

The Bible promises that this potter shapes all things for good
for those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

What assurance we can find in that fact--

regardless of whatever physical limitation we may have been born with,
or whatever tragic circumstance we may have encountered
as we travel through life.

God is the potter, molding us according to his good purpose—

shaping the pot as seems best to him.

We ought to bow before his sovereign rule
with an assured faith in his goodness.

That's the first lesson that comes to us from this picture of God given to us by Jeremiah.

But it is interesting to see the emphasis in this passage shifts
as we move to vv. 6-10.

The Lord moves from emphasizing his sovereignty as the potter
to our responsibility as the clay.

“Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?”

V.6-- **“If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted,
torn down and destroyed,
and if that nation I warned repents of its evil,
then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.**

And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom
is to be built up and planted,
and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me,
then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.”

God is free alright—free to do with the clay whatever he desires.

But now that freedom of God is exercised

with a view to the moral response of human beings.

God responds to the quality of the clay.

We are not mere puppets in the plan of God--

we are responsible moral agents,

and God respects our moral choices.

If we repent,

he will relent.

We might call what we see here a “responsive sovereignty.”^{1//}

Now this is significant in a couple of ways--

First, it points to the contingency of biblical prophecy--

Jonah went to Nineveh with the message of God--

“**Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned,**” he said.

That was the verdict of God upon these people.

But the people of that city, from the King down,

humbled themselves before the Lord,

and turned from their sin.

¹ Brueggemann, cited in C. Wright, 213.

They repented and God relented—he did not send his judgment upon them,
as he is free to do—just like the potter.

An example in the other direction is found in 1 Samuel 2--

The Lord had promised Eli the priest that his sons would also minister before the Lord,
but when they began to treat the offerings with contempt
and to sleep with the women who served at the place of worship,¹
the Lord changed his mind, so to speak,
and he cut off Eli's sons from the priestly office.

In conformity with his unchanging character,

God is free to respond to the choices of people.

So every divine threat becomes a challenge to repent

and see that threat cancelled;

and every divine promise is a call to persevere in faith

to see that promise fulfilled.²

The Lord exercises a responsive sovereignty.

A second implication of this picture comes to mind:

we must never claim that we are not responsible for our actions.

Adam claimed that the woman made him do it.

In previous ages, people would say that the Devil made them do it.

Now they're more likely to blame it on their genes or their parents

or their disadvantaged socio-economic conditions.

¹ 1 Sam. 2:12,22

² Kidner 76

No one wants to take responsibility--

I think of the poem that says it so well--

The college professor says:

"Such rawness in a pupil is a shame;
The high school preparation is to blame."

The high school teacher says:

"Good heavens, what crudity--the boy's a fool!
The fault of course is grammar school"

The grade school teacher cries:

"From such stupidity may I be spared;
They send them to me so unprepared."

The kindergarten teachers says:

"Such lack of training did I never see;
What kind of woman must the mother be?"

But the mother laments:

"Poor helpless child--he's not to blame!
His father's folks are just the same."

There is no place for a moral determinism that undermines human responsibility.

We will be held accountable for the choices we make.

No, the Lord says, **"if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent"**

We have no excuse.

We are responsible for our actions--

the Potter will give us nothing that we don't deserve.

God is the sovereign ruler of his creation,

and we are responsible moral agents.

We must hold these two truths together,

for the Bible certainly does,

And we see both here in the picture of God as the potter sitting at his wheel,
molding the clay as he sees fit.

“Now, therefore” the Lord says in v. 11--

bringing to a conclusion what he has to say to the people--

“Now, therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem,

‘This is what the Lord says:

**“Look! I am preparing a disaster for you
and devising a plan against you.**

**So turn from your evil ways, each one of you,
and reform your ways and your actions.”**

The potter is at work--

and what he has in mind for this lump of clay is not good.

He is **“preparing”** (and this is the same word used of the “forming” of the potter)
and what he is preparing, he calls a **“disaster.”**

That's the design the potter is devising.

“It is simply consequence of your evil ways--

It is the judgment for your sin,” he says.

“Repent,” he says, “Turn from your sin,”
and let the potter remold you into something useful,
into something beautiful.

And he will--
he has one plan in mind,
but he will revise it, he will relent,
if you repent and turn from your evil ways. /

And what “**evil ways**” was the Lord referring to in the life of the people of Judah?

Chiefly what we looked at last week from chap. 10--
They must turn from their idolatry.

They had replaced the living and true God
with gods of their own making—
worthless idols who have turned them from the ancient paths.
They had not loved the Lord with all their heart, soul, strength and mind.
They had not dealt justly with the weak and powerless,
They had not acted mercifully toward the poor.

They had forgotten the One who had brought them out of the slavery of Egypt
and into this promised land.

They had forsaken the Lord and become just like all the other nations of the world.
They were offering sacrifices to the gods of Canaan,
and even burning their own sons in the fire
as offerings to Baal.

“Look! I am preparing a disaster for you
and devising a plan against you,” the Lord says.
So turn from your evil ways, each one of you,
and reform your ways and your actions.’

So how does this message apply to us?

First, notice that Jeremiah’s words are addressed to

“the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem”—

that is, to the people of God.

So the first application of this word ought to be to God’s people today—

to the church.

And we must appreciate that God will judge the church—

In the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3,

five include the call to repent.

Peter declares that judgment begins with the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

We must beware--

The sin of idolatry can easily creep into the life of the church.

And though Christ’s church will not be overcome by the forces of evil in this world,

that’s not to say that parts of his church may come under his judgement.

Without gospel fidelity—both in what we believe and preach,

and in how we live—

without gospel fidelity we risk the disaster planned by the potter.

May we turn from anything that distorts our witness to the gospel—

ways in which we simply reflect the world and not Jesus Christ.

But notice, in v. 7, Jeremiah refers to the judgement of any “**nation or kingdom**”
that “**does evil in my sight and does not obey me.**”

Our God is the God of all nations.

So wouldn't his judgment include our nation—the United States of America.

Our pledge of allegiance includes the words “one nation under God”—
not declaring that we are somehow under the special blessing of God,
but that we are under the righteous judgment of God.
We as a nation are accountable to him.

What do you think?

Is the Potter devising such a plan for disaster against *us* as a nation?

We are not Israel, we are not God's chosen people,
but don't we have a rich Christian heritage?

Aren't we filled, as perhaps no other nation in the world,
with the richest of resources for knowing and understanding the will of God.

There are more Bibles per capita here
than has ever existed in the history of humanity.

Churches abound,

Christian ministries of every sort
reach out to every segment of society.

We have every opportunity for spiritual enrichment.

But we are experiencing a moral deficit--
a spiritual deficit that is far more threatening to the health of this nation
than any budget deficit.

We are approaching moral bankruptcy.

Our culture calls good evil and evil good.

Biblical teaching, held by Christians through the centuries,
is now considered bigoted, if not downright wicked.

And the Christian church is reviled by many
as the gravest threat to social liberation and freedom.

I can't help but think of some other words of Thomas Jefferson
engraved on the walls of his memorial here in Washington:
"Indeed, I tremble for my country when reflect that God is just:
that his justice cannot sleep forever:"

"Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you."

As a nation, we must repent.

But let's not think we can get off the hook
by pointing the finger at society at large--

Notice the individual responsibility emphasized here in v. 11--

"So turn from your evil ways, each one of you . . ." says the Lord.

"Repent!" he says,

and he is speaking to each one of us—

whether you are a Christian believer here this morning or not. /

So how would the Lord want you to repent?

Have you turned from the idols that have taken the place of God in your life--
the idols that occupy all your time,
the idols that monopolize your dreams.

Or maybe he would have you repent

from a casual attitude toward God and his kingdom.

You have just a half-hearted interest in the central concerns of God--

--moral integrity, godliness, is of only passing interest to you;

it only applies to certain parts of your life.

--the advancement of the gospel is not a high priority.

You don't take much time to pray for the honor of Christ--

to pray for revival among God's people--

there are just too many other things to do.

Repent, the Lord says--

for you, too, bear responsibility for your own moral state.

“So turn from your evil ways, *each one of you,*

and reform your ways and your actions.”--

For the Lord is devising a plan of disaster.

You would think that that this is where the Lord's message would end--

with this call to repentance.

This call would go out,

and then the prophet would simply wait and see what happened.

But our passage doesn't end there.

Look at v.12--

The Lord tells Jeremiah what will happen when he delivers this message--

You will call them to repent,

v. 12--**“But they will reply,**

‘It’s no use

We will continue with our own plans;

we will all follow the stubbornness of our evil hearts.”

“It’s no use! There’s no way!” they will say.

The Lord knows that Jeremiah’s call to repentance will fall on deaf ears

because it will be heard by people with hardened hearts.

As strange as it may seem--

as he puts it in v.14--

as unexpected as the snow on the mountains of Lebanon

vanishing from its rocky slopes,

or the cool waters from its distant sources ever ceasing to flow--

as illogical as it could possibly be--

my people have forgotten me, the Lord says--

and they have gone after worthless idols.

This judgment is inevitable.

Not only have the people rejected the Lord’s message of repentance,

they have also rejected the Lord’s messenger--

v.18--

They said, “Come let’s make plans against Jeremiah; . . .

So come, let’s attack him with our tongues

And pay no attention to anything he says.”

We’ll hear more about that next week.

The call to repentance stands,

but the Lord knows that it has no prospect of success--

for like seed falling on an asphalt road, it simply will not take root.

To this call to repent, they will reply—

“We will continue with our own plans;

we will all follow the stubbornness of our evil hearts.”

The possibility of God relenting from judgment is presented,

but that possibility seems merely hypothetical;

it’s just theoretical--

for the people have already lost the moral power to respond. /

And as the passage continues in the next chapter,

there is a second use of pottery to convey God’s truth--

19:1—**“This is what the Lord says, “Go and buy a clay jar form a potter.”**

**Take the leaders of Israel with you to the Valley of Ben Hinnom
near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate.”**

This was the place where the garbage was burned,

and where all the broken pottery was thrown out in a dump.

And then we read in v. 10, **“break the jar while those who go with you are watching, and say to them, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says:**

I will smash this nation and this city

just as this potter’s jar is smashed and cannot be repaired. . . .

This is what I will do to this place and to those who live here, declares the Lord.”

God’s judgment is coming.

The clay is already hardened and it will be smashed to pieces.

Why won’t they respond?

It’s a problem of the heart.

Jeremiah had said it in the previous chapter--

17:9-- **“The heart is deceitful above all else and beyond cure.**

Who can understand it?”

Earlier in the book

the Lord calls to Israel: **“circumcise your hearts”** (4:4)

“O Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved” (4:14).

But this is exactly what Israel can’t do.

Seven times in the book the Lord says

“They have followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts”

(7:24; 9:14; 11:8; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17; also 5:23)

Three times he says they **“were stiff-necked and would not listen”** (7:26; 17:23; 19:15)

In 17:10 we read that **“Judah’s sin is engraved with an iron tool**

on the tablets of their hearts.”

It's indelible; it's permanent (cf. 2:25).

They are living in moral bondage--

a bondage of their own making,

a bondage for which they are fully responsible and accountable--

a moral bondage that has left them incapable of self-reform.

The disease is too far advanced;

their heart disease is incurable.

The prognosis is death.

And that's just what Judah faced--

The northern kingdom of Israel had experienced judgment

a hundred years before,

Now the southern kingdom was ripe for judgment,

and Jeremiah's message is that only on the other side of that judgment--

only after their Exile in Babylon will the Lord do for them

what they cannot do for themselves--

He himself will save them--

when, as we read in 24:7--

“I will give those who return from the Exile a heart to know me--

And they will return to me with all their heart.”

31:33-- **“I will write my law on their hearts.”**

32:39-- **“I will give them singleness of heart--**

I will inspire them to fear me.”

Or as the Lord says in Ezekiel 36:26--

“I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you;

I will remove from you your heart of stone

and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my Spirit in you

and will move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

It's the promise of a divine heart transplant--

nothing less will do.

Judah is headed for judgment--

they are called to repent, but they won't repent.

You could even say, they can't repent.

The prophet's words fall on their hearts like the warm sun on clay.

It simply hardens them even more.

The word of God can do that--

Instead of eliciting repentance,

it only arouses resentment--

“Just who does God think he is, anyway,

Telling me what to do!”

Who is he?

Why, he is the Potter, that's who.

And if you are to respond to his message today,
you must understand that.
And you must cry out to that Potter for mercy--
before it's too late for you—
while you are still moldable in his hands—
so that he can remold you into something beautiful in his sight.

You must cry out to the Potter to remake you--
to give you a new heart--
to put his Spirit in you,
so that you might see his goodness and grace
poured out in the giving of his Son Jesus Christ for you.

Call to him for mercy,
lest the heat of the Word of God comes upon you today
and instead of melting you like wax,
it hardens your heart like clay in a furnace.

Make no mistake—
it will do one or the other—
Which will it be?

Pray to the Potter--
“O Lord, soften my heart--
mold my heart into a heart that responds to your love.”

Don't think that you can wait and do that whenever you like--

it's not true.

If the Lord is calling you, respond today--

for one day it may be too late--

and that picture of the broken pot beyond repair may become a picture of you.

Prayer

Closing Song:

Benediction:

Rom. 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"

For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

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God Speaks through the Prophet Jeremiah, #5

Feb. 14, 2021

**“The Rights of the Potter
And the Responsibility of the Clay”**

Jer. 18:1-12

When Jeremiah visited the potter’s house, he saw a picture of the work of God—both in God’s sovereignty and in our responsibility. It is a picture that calls for a response of repentance and faith.

I. Bow before God’s sovereignty (vv. 1-6)

II. Recognize your responsibility (vv. 7-10)

III. Repent and reform your ways (v. 11)

IV. Cry out for God’s grace before it’s too late (v.12)

Sermon Response:

**“The Rights of the Potter
And the Responsibility of the Clay”**

Jer. 18:1-12

- What are some of the biblical metaphors that come to mind that help us to understand who God is and how we are to relate to him?

- Does the notion of God’s sovereignty frighten you? baffle you? assure you? Why?

- The metaphor of the potter’s freedom moves to the responsibility of the clay. What does the notion of God’s “responsive sovereignty” say about our human responsibility? What are ways that people seek to avoid their moral responsibility?

- Do you find this passage convicting or comforting? How do you see it applying to the church? to our nation? to you as an individual?

- Why do we need God’s grace and mercy (and the Spirit’s power) to respond to his call to repent?

- Take some time to pray in response to the word of God in Jer. 18.

