

The following is a transcription of Pastor Melissa Scott's teaching on The Potter's House, as she preached it live from the Los Angeles University Cathedral.

THE POTTER'S HOUSE

Turn your Bibles to Jeremiah 18.

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, He wrought a work." How many have that scratched out: "a work"? Okay, there's less than half of you. Let's read through the text and I'll come back to that. *"He wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he make it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it."* Underline the words, *"as seemed good to the potter to make it."* *"Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? Saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."*

Now, in G. Campbell Morgan's work, he (G. Campbell Morgan) makes the correction to say that this article "a" work should rather read "His" work because God, as pictured as the potter, is not making some abstract piece of work over there. He's working His work on the wheels. So you can take that "a" and put a circle or a line through it and put "His" on top of it. It is HIS work. Now it's kind of ironic how God enters into all these situations. Over the years that I've listened, this is probably my favorite message of all the messages. How many times I heard my husband say Jeremiah, who was the toughest guy, the toughest man in the land... And then you read about Jeremiah's beginning, when he was born. He says, "I was the smallest, the least in my village." In other words, "what would God want of me?" Jeremiah goes on to speak some of the greatest prophetic words regarding the seventy years and the people taken away in bondage. He outlives five dynasties of kings and rulers. And this poor man gets labeled (I think he got a bad rap) "the weeping prophet" because he writes a book called Lamentations. But he was tough. Nothing could break his spirit. They put him in a pit, he's sinking; what does he do? He says, "I'm going to send money to buy back a field, my inheritance" a field in Anathoth. That picture to say, hope; although everything looks terrible right now, there will be hope we'll return to that land again-- prosperous.

What happens when you read in the latter part of Jeremiah when they're burning the scroll? That insidious picture. Jeremiah just goes and writes another one. He has a scribe and they go write another one. He had a never-say-die, I-will-not-quit, I-will-not-give-up, attitude. The people come to him and say, *"Speak Jeremiah, give us a word."* And he speaks a word and they go do the opposite. And he has to go with them and watch them do the opposite. This picture of Jeremiah, that God takes to the potter's house, is one picture. Actually there are more references in the Bible than just Jeremiah. We have the reference of Isaiah who makes mention of the potter's house. And Isaiah has a huge prophetic voice that announces the coming the Child, the prophesy in Isaiah 53 The Suffering Servant Messiah to come. He speaks of the potter's house. And of course Paul, quoting right out of Isaiah in the 9th chapter.

Paul (and all of these men) are rough, tough characters of God. Different times, different places, yet they all reference the clay, the potter. It's an interesting thing to behold. Now God's not trying to say something that's going to be a popular message. In fact I think that's maybe why I felt compelled to look at this through the eyes of Ephesians 2:10, because I know when people read, "For we are His workmanship," it makes it sound like we might have made a contribution or we had something to do with it. Not if we understand the principle of the potter's house.

Now of course there are elements at the potter's house--most of you will have this in your Bible--but I'm going to add two more elements. They're not new by any means, but we're going to add two elements. Normally you have clay, a potter and the wheel. The clay, which is represented by us; the potter, God; the wheel our life circumstance

on to which the potter is going to do His work. But I'm going to add two things: water and fire. How do I know these things? Because unlike Dr. Scott (who traveled to the potter's houses), I actually made pottery. You need water. The water in our application will only go so far as to represent the Spirit of God and His word because that is needed to be the flow on which God will press His hands on us in our life situation. And fire. You need a kiln. You need to bake this final product. And I know, because I was the kiln-girl. I took charge of making sure everybody's art got safely into the oven.

I'll tell you this briefly because it's kind of funny for those of you who have done pottery. As an art student, we students were given three bricks of clay. Now of course the teacher says, "You're getting these three bricks because you must produce three different works." But really, the truth be known, they knew what was going to happen to at least two of the three so it's like, "three-strikes-you're-out." I watched the teacher, a wonderful little old lady. She had a cane and she made it look so easy. She had terrible arthritis and I remember watching her hands and they'd shake. I remember watching her hands and thinking, "Ha! That's easy!" Right. I was a kid. So I sat down with my first piece of clay and it was recommended that we don't think big, but rather think small. Of course when you're a kid everything is easy and it's no "problema." Right? So I sat down and I had that wheel going about ninety miles an hour. They have these pump pedals, like a sewing machine, you had to pump it, pump it like that for five minutes to get the thing to start going. And then another pedal, which was the speed regulator. Well, I had that thing going so fast it was just going and going. Actually I was watching that little center dish on there and it was going round and I thought, "Wow, that looks like a record in there." (What is a record these days, right?) Now I put that block of clay and got my hands all full of water and I'm ready to go and I just "mmmm!" I just pressed right in there. And the thing went flying--whirrrr-pooof! One down. On the second one I got a little wiser. I slowed the wheel down a little bit. I was probably now doing the legal speed limit and I thought to myself, I won't press that hard (because I didn't want it to fly off and hit the kid next to me like it did the last time). And man, that thing probably took me an hour to just make a little dent in it. So that didn't go too well, because at the end, I had to rush it before class finished. Of course it ended up somewhere also.

The third one was a good work. But I know what it takes. And of course my analogy breaks down because we have a tendency to think that somehow the potter's work is easy. Well it's easy if you've got malleable clay. It's easy if you've got the water that's flowing on this vessel. It's easy if you understand submission to the potter.

We have four principles. Most of you will have these in your Bible. If you don't, you can just write them somewhere.

1. The principle, starting point: GOD IS THE BOSS. The supremacy and the sovereignty of God, His divine governing we saw in the Book of Ephesians. In the economy of God, the principle is that God has the absolute right to do with this piece of clay what He wants. And if He wants to mash it and throw it in the trash, that's His business, not yours. Likewise, for every person sitting beside you. If we come to the conclusion that God's the boss, we then have the tendency to say, "Hey look God, you've got a hard enough time with all these other pieces of clay around me. I think you should let me govern the wheel, let me adjust the speed. I can do that, you know. I can be trusted to do that..."

God's the boss. The perfect illustration--Isaiah says it--Paul says it, "*Doth the clay say to the potter, 'what makest thou?'*" Does the clay have the right to talk back to the potter?" Well, don't answer that. Too many times we can read through a passage in the Bible and say, "Well that's somebody else." But, start reading Romans 9 and you'll recognize what Paul's saying. He says that God's saying, "*I'll have mercy on whom I want to have mercy.* One vessel made to honor, another to dishonor. *Jacob I love, Esau I hated.*" He had every single right to do what He wanted to do. In fact, if you keep reading in that chapter he talks about the wild olive branch, the tree being grafted back on. He has the right to save; which is what I've been saying for weeks. He has the right to save whom He wants. And we get stuck in this format somehow, "Well I want to submit to God, but can you not make it so difficult? I know God's the boss, I know, but..."

Now listen carefully. Number two is:

2. THE PURPOSE. I'm going to outline the purpose in one word: HIS. It's His purpose. "Well, I've heard you say, Mrs. Scott, that God wants to conform us to the image of His Son." That's true. And Ephesians 4 says, "Until we all

come to the unity of the faith." That's true. To be conformed to His Son's likeness, to bring out the Christ-likeness in me and you, absolutely. But there's an element missing from the beginning.

Turn in your Bibles to Genesis, chapter 2, verse 7, "*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils.*" And read at verse 6 where it says, "*There went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.*" Well dust and water makes muck. Clay. And if you read the Hebrew, we looked at that word when it says, "*the LORD God formed*" as this word here, *yawtsar*. "the one making, the one being potter." Being translated as that, takes you right back to Jeremiah 18. If you read it in the Hebrew, "Get up, go you down house, the one being potter" *ha yawtsar*. The same word being used, "the one being potter," the potter who was in the beginning, and I mean that in the sense of God being the boss, when He formed and created. We have a tendency to make this an abstract picture that somehow the clay formed itself. The clay formed itself, right? In Genesis 2 isn't that what it says? The clay made itself? That's not what it says. It says, "The one being potter, He did this work." The same thing is being spoken of. And by the way, the pot, the vessel marred in the hand of the potter, it marred itself. It's not because God pressed too much or did too little or too fast or too quick or... The clay, the vessel marred itself. "What do you mean?" Go back to Genesis, that clay--Adam, that clay--Eve, marred itself. Distrust, disfaith, and disobedience.

Everything is going to take us back to the Book of Ephesians and His purpose. He chose out from among, from others He didn't choose, He chose for Himself, His purpose. The Bible's full of the purpose--God's purpose. Well I can live with the purpose. I'd like to be more of Him and less of me. I already know that. But do you look at yourself as a vessel of grace? Because until Ephesians 2, we're dead in trespasses and sin. Now I look at myself as a vessel, that every day, little by little as it says, we're to crucify the old man. Little by little, every day that old nature of me is dying away. Sometimes very little, but little by little being transformed, and this occurrence makes me a vessel of grace. While God was doing His work, it transformed itself from a dull, lifeless nothing piece of clay, being transformed into a vessel. And at that point it was marred. It's very subtle. You may think, "Well what's the big deal?" He already made Adam and Eve. They were already vessels. This is the point that this represents, this *marring* represents our free will, like in Isaiah; each person goes their own way. Sin at its root, "I do what works for me. I'm going to go my way, not God's way." "Well, you mean I exist for that purpose to be conformed, to be transformed, to be all this?" Yes. Now, if you've got that, you're going to need to look at the process. Number three.

3. THE PROCESS. This is my favorite part of the message. How does God carry out His process? The WHEEL. I'm the CLAY. God's the POTTER doing the work on the wheel, which is how the process is going to be carried out. And I'm on this wheel. How many of you, in the last seven days thought, "This is my circumstance, what I'm going through, my troubles, my tribulations, my everything." How many of you thought, "This is part of my wheel. Thank God." How many of you thought that? "Don't show me your hands. I know because I'm guilty too." I griped about something instead of saying, "This is part of my wheel." This is how God's shaping me. Everything that's going on in my life--God enters in to all things to work His good.

How many of you view your life (your circumstance, your failures, your short fallings, all the debacles in your life) and yourself as caricature on the wheel where your life looks like it's spinning out of control? How many of you feel like you're on a wheel, lifting your hands up and saying, "Lord I know you've got me. I'm praising you. I know you've got me. It's okay." Versus you who are revolving on the wheel and you look like a woman that's fighting, "Get me off of here! Mine is supposed to be the genteel wheel!" You know, the smooth kind. Right? This is how wonderful God has been to me. I'm so grateful that I can come here today. I feel honored to present this message to you. Not because it's something new. You've heard it many times, most of you. But because I look at this and I see myself on the wheel just like the next person. It's hard for me to accept that God is working a work on me that I finally have said, "There's nothing that I can do. I've just got to trust You. You're the one being potter. I commit myself to You. And my failures and my troubles, all of the things that I go through, all of the things I've gone through." He uses those to accomplish the process. And I know without a doubt, there are times when I thought, "You know, if I could be on this wheel, but I could control the speed or I could control how many people are looking in while I'm being spun out of control." How many times have I dropped my guard in the flesh and thought, "My life is spinning out of control"? He's got it under control. He's got this whole picture, just like He's got the whole world in His hands.

"Well, yeah," you might be thinking, "that's great, but it doesn't apply to me. God could not possibly know how badly my life is bent out of shape." Oh, yeah? In fact that's the favorite type of clay that He likes. The type of clay that sits on the shelf that has this, "I'm pretty good already. Thanks," attitude. I think He likes to leave those clay pieces there. He picks up the ones that have some mixed in ingredients, different color, different shapes, different sizes. Some that thought they'd never get the opportunity to be shaped. He looks at those, puts them on that wheel and begins to do His work. Now we can say, "We are His workmanship." And that's true. There's that element that I added--the water. In the process of spinning, remember we looked at those power words and I said the Bible says the power is in us already. Those words tell me that while He's working the work, He's empowered me. The Bible says He won't tempt me beyond what I'm able. Sometimes I think He thinks I'm really able... but He says He won't tempt me beyond what I'm able. In fact it says He'll provide a way of escape.

The thing that I marvel at every time I come back to this, is the method, God's method with man. And this is why I think God is the greatest artist. He's not only the greatest wordsmith. He's the greatest artist in the world. He can make something that is a throw-away reject into something as beautiful as anything you've ever seen. There have been days when it's rainy outside and gloomy. In times past I'd say, "Aw, I hate the rain. Why can't it be sunny today?" Even when it's rainy now I go outside and say, "Wow! Look how green everything is. Look how beautiful." Even when it's gray and cloudy it's like God opens your eyes to say, "Quit griping and start appreciating the masterpiece that I made." Why spend your whole life griping about something when you could be saying, "Thank you for this rainy day because it's really beautiful. You made it."

Now the process, like I said, is my favorite part. Some of us don't really believe that this is a life application. How are you or I going to become more Christ-like if we keep staying in our little box? God calls us, chooses us out from among others He didn't choose. And then there's God's artistry. Take a look at David, and I love this about David because he embodies everything you need to know about the life of a believer emphasized ten times, twenty times, a hundred times over. Not perfect, he was an adulterer; murderer; king; he was victorious, next, he's running for cover to the cave Adullam. Everybody wants to be king, but nobody wants to have the cave Adullam experiences. That's part of the wheel! All those cave Adullam experiences with all those crazy things, that was part of David becoming the man he was. David was transformed from tentative, "I might make it" to "I will trust in the Lord."

We can sift all this away and just ask the question, "Do you trust?" I'm sorry to say it like this, but do you trust the One being Potter? The One who died for you. Do you trust Him enough to say, "I commit my life to you"? Do you trust enough to quit trusting the flesh? I received letters from people this week that made my heart melt. This woman who just loves the teaching, said: "They kicked me out of the church because I smoked cigarettes." They kicked her out of the church. And I thought, is this woman going to be turned off on God because of this? Because she got kicked out of the church? There's more. How many letters I get from people that say, "I have an alcohol problem. And when my church found out, they kicked me out." I'm sorry, but my Bible says Jesus came to save that which was lost. And as far as I'm concerned, every single person has something wrong with them. It may not be an outward thing that you can see, but I have plenty wrong with me, and you've got plenty wrong with you. That's the concept of the potter's house, and if God will empower you, you can be victorious over anything that is ruling the flesh because God empowers us. It doesn't mean that you're going to have the victory over everything, but you can be like Paul and say, "This, I can get victory over." Yes. And that brings me to the person.

4. THE POTTER. The God that we serve, He doesn't look like the creation of my mind. If we could let modern day religion paint the picture of the potter, we'd be sitting in the potter's chair and the clay would be working on the potter. That's the modern attitude in place of perfect submission. Instead, "Have your way, Lord. I'm just a lousy, rotten piece of clay anyway. You do with me what You will and I know when I come through this I'm going to be something good because You made me good, not because I brought anything to the table."

I envision the potter this way. Maybe you can say it's child-like, but that's okay. I envision the potter, God sitting at His wheel, looking at this piece of clay with such care and such detail. When His hands are on me, while I'm busy fighting and swinging at the air and finally I submit, I think, that He would even deign to put His hands on this contaminated, dirty piece of clay, that by His touch, by the shed blood of His Son I'm made clean. This person, just like David out of Psalm 139, "Who sees my uprising, my down falling. He knows my thoughts afar off. He knows my ways." They're not good. And yet He still works on me. And I am that vessel. You today are that vessel that He's working on. We marred ourselves. Ephesians 2 tells us the condition we're in, but we serve a potter. We serve God, Almighty God, all-powerful God that takes the care to sit and watch. And when it says, He knows the hairs of my

head and He sees the sparrow fall. He knows while I'm on that wheel just being whirled around, the one thing He's looking for while His hands are on me is for me to trust Him implicitly. If there was a message behind the message, it would be God speaking to you and to me, "I've got you in My hands. If the pressure gets a little tough, if it feels a little squeezed, I've got you. My hands are on you. Just trust Me. Have faith and trust Me. Trust and Faith are what I didn't get from Adam and Eve. That's what I didn't get from these other people. Just trust Me. My hands are on you. And as I shape you, and as you feel this poking and prodding going on, on your piece of clay, quit, as He says to Paul, *'Quit kicking against the pricks.'* We can be like Paul when he comes to his senses and says, *"Lord, absolute Master, what would you have me do?"* Trust Him. Trust Him.

This is such a simple message but think about the wonder. When I look at my life. While I was a dull block of clay, while I was shapeless and didn't have any luster, God saw me. He saw something good in me. Popular messages are peddled today on "the great potential in you." Well, that's true for Jesus' sake, for God's sake. There's great potential in you. He sees that. He views us as though we're something we're not, which brings me to the last element.

We have the CLAY, me and you; we have the POTTER, God; the WHEEL, our life; the WATER, His Spirit; and the FIRE. Unlike gold, which gets put in to be tried so that the pureness comes out, the last passage for a piece of clay is to be put into the kiln. You're baked so you don't change shapes anymore. He's got you to where He wants you when you are put into that kiln to bake. Go with me now to Ephesians where I bring this message to a close. Ephesians 2:7, "That in the ages to come He might show," He might display (and I would add, He might put on display) "the exceeding riches of His grace." Who do you think or what do you think that is? Do you think God's going to put on display some power of His own? "The exceeding riches of His grace" those that were put on the wheel that went through the principle, the purpose and the process by way of the person put on display to show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP. That's my message.

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