

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 34 Sunday 26 August_2018.

Background text READ **2 Timothy 2: 14 - 26** **God's household vessels for functionality and hospitality.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZNzgwsupds>

This year we are exploring what it means to become truly, fully human and to bring glory to God. (In such a statement we are already linking together in relationship God and human beings as a foundation about what we want to say about being human).

Last time I spoke at the end of August I spoke on the metaphor God the Potter and Human Clay Pots. **Two OT Prophets who used the metaphor were first Isaiah and then Jeremiah.** Isaiah himself said to God: *We are like clay, and you are like the potter.* (64:8) Isaiah is also heard to make the point that if God is our Maker – what is more important the potter or the clay? Also, the voice of God declares *“Does a clay pot dare to argue with its maker, a pot that is like all the others? Does the clay ask the potter what he is doing? Does the pot complain that its maker has no skill? (29:15)*

Metaphors and other devises e.g. Parables are used throughout the Bible to illustrate truths about God and God's relationship with people. Other metaphors: Shepherd and sheep; Father and child; God the Refiner.

Today we are focussing on other metaphors in **2 Timothy chapter 2** including the metaphor of GOD'S HOUSEHOLD and the VESSELS for hospitality within this.

In the New testament **Romans 9: 20 and 21** Paul reminds the Christians in Rome that the Potter has the right and creative power to shape the vessel for his purposes. The potter decides whether we are to be used as **a vase, a jug or even a toilet** (modern toilets are fired from clay that has fewer contaminates). **When Paul writes to Timothy (2 Tim 2: 20) he reminds him that in a house intended to offer hospitality many kinds of vessels are needed.**

The process that the Potter and Clay have to go through is the same whether we are being made into a vase, a jug or a toilet. At the hand of the Potter there will be wedging, wetting, centering, opening and shaping, drying, firing under intense heat, decorating and repeated firings the more complicated the pattern and design.

Each part of the process of the Potter and the Clay being made into a vessel has significance and can easily be applied to how God works lovingly and persistently with us as human clay – both individually and as nations and communities. How? By using circumstances and relationships to wedge us, prepare us for future events and so on. For example, the firing under great heat is used by James (1:2-4) to argue that various trials and difficulties refine us of impurities in our motives and values. Centering in life is absolutely vital to experiencing peace in our lives – for us the centering is upon Jesus. Even the drying time can describe perhaps times of boredom or simply waiting for God or something to happen... Last week I asked you to go away and meditate upon this metaphor and visualize being **held in God's hands** what would happen inside you? What would Jesus say? (Retreat exercise – what is happening in your life at the moment?)

Today I'd like each of us to think a little about our purpose and identity and how knowing this enables us to grow into our full humanity in relation to others and God. (God's hands are shaping us but also God's hands want to use us).

As Paul writes to Timothy he calls him his "dear son" (1:2 and 2:1) and he is urging him to be strong (he is very aware it seems of Timothy's strengths and also his weaknesses). He wants Timothy pass on the message about Jesus to reliable people who in turn will teach others the message. Timothy has a particular role as a teacher and evangelist of God's message but the principles Paul teaches relate to all of us whatever purpose or job God has given us personally in his household. The shared task of passing on the message and evangelizing the world belongs to all Christians and not just a few.

Human identity is closely linked to knowing our purpose – God given. (*Chief purpose to glorify God and enjoy God forever...Presbyterians*) Paul uses 2 metaphors to describe Timothy's purpose that are worth remembering – he says that he is both a Worker and a Servant. (At other times he uses the metaphors to Timothy of athlete and soldier). He is reminding that Timothy that his identity and fulfillment is tied into working for God his Master and that he Paul will love and support him in this and also pray for him – as a true father in the faith). Knowing our purpose is great but it doesn't mean that fulfilling it will necessarily be easy or a walk in the park).

V15 "Do your best to win full approval in God's sight, as a worker who is not ashamed of his work, one who correctly teaches the message of God's truth". Paul in his choice of a specific Greek word here is telling Timothy to "CUT GOD'S WORD STRAIGHT" and not to distort it as some teachers do and he gives the example of 2 men Hymenaeus and Philetus who have wrongly taught that "the Resurrection has already happened".

One piece of very good advice Paul gives to Timothy is V16 "Keep away from profane and foolish discussions which only drive people further away from God". See also 2: 23 some discussions only end in pointless arguments. They are a waste of both time and energy.

Clear and strong advice: v19 "All who say that they belong to the Lord must turn away from wrong doing". To me this reads as an imperative – something we must do. To others it may read almost as a test – if people don't turn away from doing what God says is wrong then maybe they have not really and fully given themselves to God. Perhaps elements of both are true in our lives? We want to give ourselves fully to God but we hold back a good percentage of ourselves and our will?

METAPHOR of the day. **Vv20, 21 In a large HOUSEHOLD like God's there are all sorts of vessels – people who look different, are different and have different purposes.** There are dishes and bowls for different purpose (*for every good deed*) – or as I illustrated last week: **vases, jugs and even toilets.** This metaphor is about purpose and purity. Each is to be valued whether they are made of a precious metal like silver or gold or of other earthy things like clay or wood. (**PURITY of doctrine and life – Stott**).

Each of these things needs to be kept clean on both the inside and the outside. And ALL the vessels are needed for functionality, welcome and hospitality. In a

large house whether in the Middle East or anywhere In the world a large house is used for many things – the conduct business from, to shelter and to function as a place of welcome and hospitality. God's people – God's household is like that (even in a church all the functions not just the gifts are needed. Gifted people are pretty useless if all they want to do is stand on the shelf or sit on the chairs and be looked at).

There is a need to DEDICATE ourselves to be USEFUL (example when children are born to Christian parents they dedicate themselves in front of the church and the church dedicates itself to support those parents in bringing up their child within God's love, within the community of the church). Fulfilling our intention to be useful to God - to be clean on the inside and the outside and willing to work for God needs both God's grace (2:1) because of our union with Jesus and also the encouragement of others in the household.

Paul as Timothy's elder mentor is encouraging him here. Specifically he says here to Timothy – **v22 Avoid youthful passions.** Now we don't know what Timothy's personal "youthful passions" were...But Paul tells him to avoid them – run away from. I doubt that they in that society were chasing after young women, maybe it was just hanging out with the lads or shiving off work and going fishing. Whatever your youthful passions were and that diverted you then – don't let them divert you now. (One thing that as church leaders locally we have discussed recently is how many people in their 20's and even 30's linked to churches want to work to gain large salaries, and to have large social lives and all that goes with it, live in high quality accommodation and perhaps just a smattering of church and volunteering for God. Perhaps that is youthful passions that some people never grow out of??)

Strive for what? Paul advocates to Timothy here striving for righteousness (do the right in God's eyes), faith, love, peace (mentions additional things elsewhere e.g. hospitality) and **together with others of a pure heart – call out to God for help.** There needs to be a significant part in our lives that is committed to meeting with others who have a pure heart (centre of their being) and **praying together.** Join in with all the others of God's people who are asking for the things God wants – not just what we want.

V24 DON'T be quarrelsome! Some people are so unhappy inside they are out to pick a fight with whoever will take the bait. Don't join in. Instead:-

V25 BE kind to all, a good and patient teacher, gentle as you correct your opponents...(Timothy can expect to have these as he is a teacher).

A sign of being fully mature as a human person is having left behind you particular youthful passions, being able to let God help us to control and direct our strong feelings. This is possible because we have a certain assurance of our identity and purpose in life.

Also we have a desire for purity/ cleanness on the inside and so dedicate ourselves to be useful in God's household.

I think every person involved in leadership in the church (whether with children or adults or both) is for each person 9without exception) to have functionality, purity and purpose in the household. We long for each to know a greater freedom and to agree on the overall purpose of what the household is about and trying to achieve. We work for each to contribute to the whole community and not just look out for themselves or their small family.

Does this appeal to you? Does this appeal to your heart? The “heart” in Scripture is where the left and right brain meet – where the cognitive meets the creative and we whole heartedly want something. I believe that to be at rest as humans we need to know what we are made for – to know what our role and purpose is amongst others and in the world. I need not just to know my gifting. If we know our purpose (as Jesus did) then we can know we can bring glory to God.

We hear (1 v3) that Paul is constantly praying for Timothy. He knows his strengths and his weaknesses – he sees the potential and he loves Timothy and is a role model to him which is an indicator of his love. (Let's remember that Paul wrote this letter – maybe the last thing he wrote just a few weeks before his death. There is a reliable tradition that Paul who had labored for more as 30 years as a church planter and itinerant evangelist was martyred – by beheading on the Ostian Way.