

The Lord's Message: A Message for Cracked Pots: Hope

Date: November 27, 2022

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: Genesis 12:10-20 & Matthew 1:1-2

One of the recent growing companies in the United States is Ancestry. This company has been growing by leaps and bounds. During the pandemic, while all other operations were shut down, people did not have a lot to do. They were contacting Ancestry to find their long-lost family members. This growing phenomenon has branched out to Public TV creating a show called Finding Your Roots. I love this show. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. usually has two famous American people that he interviews about discovering their family heritage. Most of the interviewees only have a short history of their family. Most of the time Mr. Gates is able, through the help of staff, to discover the family ancestors going back many generations. He is able to show the interviewees times of great joy, such as weddings and birthdays. He is also able to show them difficult times. Those times depend on the heritage of the person. Most of the time for African Americans, their ancestors stop at the time of their slavery in the United States. Sometimes for Jewish ancestry, it goes back to the holocaust. Sometimes for European whites, their ancestors were the slave holders.

I was thinking about this and I got to thinking about Jesus. I wonder what Jesus' family tree would look like. I am sure that it would be made up of the most religious of people. People who followed God, even though the path was not clear. Ones that endured suffering for their obedience to God, faithful people. Well, I do not have to wonder, because in the Bible, the Book of Matthew 1 gives us the family tree of Jesus. During this time of Advent, when we prepare our hearts for our coming Lord, the Holy Spirit is leading us in a time of exploration of Jesus' family tree, so that we will understand better this God that we love. We will discover that Jesus' family tree is not ones of saints, but one of sinners. Actually, the tree is made up of a lot of cracked pots, broken people. Just like you and me.

Let us pray.

In **Matthew 1:2**, the first person listed in Jesus' family tree is Abraham. What do we know about Abraham? If we look in **Hebrews 11: 8-10**, we find Abraham listed in the Hall of Faith. If you are going to have a member in the family tree of Jesus, then Abraham would be a good member. Right, not so fast. Abraham was sinner just like you and I.

Did you remember what Michael read in **Genesis 12:10-20**. In verse 10, Michael read that there was severe famine. Abram, who God would later change to Abraham, went down to Egypt to find food. Notice that Abram did not pray to God. Abram did not seek help from the Lord, even though God had safely brought him and his family from Ur of the Chaldeans to the promised land. You would have thought that a man who is in Jesus' family tree would have prayed to God for guidance. Abram does not do any such thing. Does that sound like a man of faith? Instead, Abram takes his family with him to Egypt. Along the way, Abram is looking at his beautiful wife Sarai. He tells her in verses 11-13. He does not care what his wife is going to have to go through being forced to have sex with a man. He only cares about his own skin. Does that sound like a man who shows compassion for others?

Sarai, I suspect begrudgingly does what Abram has asked her. She goes along with the lie. In verses 14-16, Abram is making out like a bandit. Sarai is the one that is being used. God is watching all of this. God is not happy with what is about to unfold for Sarai. God will protect Sarai, even if Abram will not. Look at verse 17. We are not told what the diseases are, but they get Pharaoh's attention. In verses 18-19, Abram's lie is exposed. In verse 20, by Pharaoh's order, Abram is allowed to leave with all that the Pharaoh has given him and also with his wife Sarai.

Abram sounds like a cracked pot. He is a liar. He does not trust God with his problems. His wife can not trust him. How did this man get to be known as a man of faith? The Good News about God is that God likes "cracked pots." When "cracked pots" surrender their lives to God, then God likes to make "cracked pots" whole. When we accept the relationship that God offers to us through His Son, Jesus, God takes our broken lives and makes them whole. John Wesley referred to this grace of God as Sanctifying Grace. The grace that is at work in our lives after we have said yes to the relationship that God offers to us. John Wesley referred to this as going on towards perfection.

Let us see the result of this grace at work in Abram's life. We pick up when Abram's name has been changed by God to Abraham. Abraham is a father. God has requested that Abraham offer his son to God. In **Genesis 22:1-14**, Abraham is tested by God.

The Story of the Cracked Pot

"A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years, this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water in his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. 'I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you.'

The bearer asked, 'Why? What are you ashamed of?'

The pot replied, 'For these past two years I am able to deliver only half of my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you don't get full value for your efforts.'

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion, he said, 'As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path.'

As they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it somewhat. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, 'Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house.'"

Through accepting the relationship that God offers through His Son Jesus and surrendering our lives to Him, God can take our unfaithful lives and move us to Faith. We have hope. Even though we are cracked pots, we are all part of Jesus' family.
Amen.