

“WE ARE BROKEN”

Text: Jeremiah 18: 1-11, preached at Bolton United Church on September 8th by Rev. Eleanor Scarlett.

This week's Lectionary readings remind us that we are still in the season of Pentecost with a focus on the Season of Creation. As people of faith, we sometimes fail to recognise that we are called to live in relationship with all of creation. God our Creator creates us and every living thing to live together in harmony and with respect for everything.

As a church we are called to recognise the importance of living with Creation for the next four weeks. With this in mind, we will be focusing on the theme of Creation. Creation time calls us to look deeply into how we connect with Creation. This season invites us to explore our attitudes toward Creation especially because we are co-creators of God's design.

As a people we have not lived lightly with creation, especially with regards to our destruction of planet earth. Creation calls us to reflect on our abuse of God's trust in us. It calls us to look deeply within ourselves and to pledge to change our ways. Creation calls us to be mindful of the four elements of creation: earth, water, air, and fire.

In our worship for today and the next three weeks our prayers will be calling us to repentance and into right relationships with each other, nature and creation. The liturgical colour for this season is orange.

Creation time fits perfectly with the fall seasons and festivals, where everything that was planted during the season of spring is ready to be harvested.

The scripture readings for today hinge on God's vision for a new creation: when all the world's brokenness will be made new. In the reading from Jeremiah chapter 18, 1-11 we hear the story of God's vision given to Jeremiah. Jeremiah was told to visit the potter's house. Brothers and sisters this morning we too are called to visit the potter's house. My question to you is this, what expectations do you have as you visit the potter's house?

As you enter the space, I ask you to be reflective, to think of yourselves as sitting in a special seat in the presence of the potter. We are all in the presence of the potter, what a unique place to be this morning. I don't know about you, but I am quite excited to be here, knowing that the potter is here with us! What are our hopes and dreams?

Just imagine that you are watching as the potter works away at something that appears to be beautiful. You are intrigued by the movement of the potter's hands; as you become more engaged you realise that the potter has discovered that the vessel being worked on was flawed, so the potter began by reworking the same piece of clay into something else. What images and visions come to mind?

Just imagine that the potter had eyes to see that the vessel was marred; something we were not able to see. The only one that was able to see the imperfection in the vessel was the potter. God had given the potter that ability and no one else.

Like the broken vessel in the potter's hands we sometimes need to experience brokenness in our everyday lives in order that we may be able to experience transformation.

In the mid 1990's, I attended a conference in Atlanta Georgia where the theme was "We are invited to the potter's house." During the opening worship a large clay pot was danced in and placed on the altar. I can remember thinking how graceful and elegant the dancer was as she brought this beautiful piece of pottery in and put it in its place.

I sat there focusing on the pot, while at the same time thinking about the talent that went into making such elegant pottery when without any warning the most un-thinkable happened. The pot was smashed into pieces in an unbelievable act of violence. It felt like a shock wave had entered my soul, some of us were crying as we too began to experience our own brokenness.

It was at this point that I felt like I was a piece of that pottery, broken, tossed and beaten yet ready and waiting to be re-made into something new. I became vulnerable and gave myself permission to leave all my flaws behind, those things that were preventing me from living in God's creative Spirit. At times, it is when we are brought to places where we are forced to face our brokenness that we can fully experience God's grace.

This past week we have seen the devastation hurricane Dorian delivered to the Bahamian people. We have seen where communities that were thriving have been destroyed and countless lives lost.

We see brokenness on the faces of the people as they lament their future.

The question is where can they find comfort at a time like this? I believe that these words spoken so long ago by the prophet Jeremiah to offer hope to a once hopeless people is still relevant today. Verse 5 -6 of the text proclaims God's message of hope for the people. "Then the word of the Lord came to me and said, "Can I not do with you Israel, as the Potter does," declares the Lord. "Like clay in the potter's hand, so you are in my hand."

The hurricane moved through the Carolinas and has now moved on to the Maritimes where homes have been destroyed, trees are down, power is out and yet no lives have been lost. We are eternally grateful as we, like the Creator hold our friends and families in our hands through our prayers.

Jeremiah's words hold true for us today even during times of brokenness God is with us. Jesus also reminds us in the gospels to leave our brokenness and all that separates us from God and God's creation behind. The brokenness of our selves, our world, our relationships with others,

our judgemental abilities, our lack of humility, our lack of compassion as well as our ideologies and hatred, injustice and violence against each other is the only way to respond to others.

As we ponder the events taking place in our communities and world let us remember that for us to be a disciple of Christ, we must lead by example. By living and acting in ways that are transforming and life giving Jesus invites us to embrace God's redeeming grace that will lead us to bask in God's creative love.

As Fredrick Buechner says, "Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are because you are part of God's Creation. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. It is for you that I created the universe. I love you." Thanks be to God. Amen!