

The Treasure in the Jar

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Luke 24; 2 Cor 4:7-18

The cross was not an end in Jesus's life; it was followed by resurrection which signifies new life, new start, new beginning.¹

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is risen!

We can say this after many years, but what about the first Sunday of Easter?

On the first Easter morning there was confusion, unbelief, people running to see if this is reality that the tomb is empty. But the angels of the Lord reminded them:

Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

"Remember how he told you".

Often Jesus reminded the disciples about this important event. (Luke 9:22, 44; 13:3; 17:25; 18:32–33; those in Galilee, and 22:37 in Jerusalem).

Resurrection is reality. It did happen. In Luke 24:45 we read that **"Jesus opened their minds so they can understand the scriptures."** I am praying that God will open our minds to understand the scriptures and to see the reality of the resurrection. Because of resurrection the faith of our fathers and mothers continued for centuries. No one will die and be tortured for something that is false news.

"The resurrection was not created by the church; rather, the church was created by the resurrection."²

What is the impact of the risen Lord in our lives?

I want to study this morning about the **treasure** that lives in our earthly body.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Cor 4:7)

Have you ever thought of yourself as a jar of clay?

-Paul who suffered, was beaten, and persecuted, knew that his body was made of clay. Jars of clay are very fragile. You look at them; you think they are firm. But a small accident, and they will shatter into pieces.

-Jesus' body, the earthly body was also a jar of clay. Remember the passion month, all those stories we read from the gospel according to Luke. Jesus was mocked, humiliated, beaten badly, tortured. He was executed in the worst way, crucified on a cross.

He was resurrected and he was given a new body, a new "jar".

His resurrection is the most important event in history. This event conquered death. Death was swallowed. Sin was defeated. Satan was conquered.

-Here is the Good News of Resurrection Sunday: Jesus Christ is our treasure.

Jars of clay reminded me of some beautiful pictures and stories from the Bible.

1-They brought back to my mind the **wedding of Cana**. Jesus was invited to the wedding. So were his mother Mary and other friends. As the wedding went on, the wine ran out. It was very embarrassing not to have enough wine for the wedding guests. Mary, the mother of Jesus asked him to do something by saying, "they have no more wine."

Jesus asked for some **jars of water** to be brought to him.

"Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. (John 2:5-7)

These jars were huge, and the amount of water was tremendous.

Besides the miracle of turning water into wine and helping the host to provide wine, there is a theological point in this story.

-Those jars of clay had a ceremonial meaning. They held hundreds of gallons of water for the ceremonial washing and the cleansing of sins.

Every Jew had to be washed with water before going to prayer.

Jesus is turning those jars to wine, there is abundance of wine. This has eschatological meaning, the Messianic banquet, in fact Messiah is here; there is abundance of wine, and JOY.

Jesus is the New Covenant. Jesus is replacing those huge jars of water with the New Wine, the New Covenant. Jesus is the new wine. Through his sacrifice on the cross, the shedding of his blood, we have a new beginning, salvation from sin.

The stone-made jars found a new meaning in Jesus.

2- I think pottery is a great way to make artistic vessels. Have you seen how the artist works with the wet clay to mold it, shape it, and eventually give it a beautiful shape?

Isaiah describes God as the ultimate pottery artist.

“Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” (Isaiah 64:8)

Acknowledging that God is our Maker, our Creator is very important. We are the clay created in His image. This shapes our identity in God.

Knowing who we are and who God is a very important element in our journey with God.

Therefore, Paul says,

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Cor 4:7)

Have you lately looked yourself in the mirror; that jar is getting “mature” (not to say old) every day.

It has been tough for many of you facing your “jar of clay.”

Our lives are full of events of joy and sorrow. There is joy of new birth of children; there is joy of weddings; there is joy of new spiritual birth for some of you; there is sorrow of losing someone, grief of loss of job, friend, spouse, daughter, mother....grief of seeing your child being ill.

Our bodies changing. It needs spare parts.

Gina Petrosyan wrote this prayer while her Jar of clay was fragile:

“Father God, everything is in your hands and in your power. We come to you again to wash our sins away and reawaken us day and night.

We thank you for our daily bread that you provide for us each day and each night.

Father God, when we’re weak, give us the strength. When we’re down, pick us up. When we’re lost, lead us in the path where we can meet again.

We all bow down and pray to you God. No matter what the doctors say and what news they give us, we know that we have you. Amen”

3-How about **the Samaritan woman who had a water jar?**

Jesus was tired and thirsty. The disciples were gone to find food. The Samaritan woman came to the well with her bucket. Jesus asked for water. The woman was surprised when a Jewish man was talking to her. That dialogue brought the Samaritan women on her knees. **She wanted to drink the Living Water, which was beyond her physical thirst.**

You know how the conversation ended:

“Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.” (John 4:28-29 NIV)

When Jesus touched the “jar” (her heart), things changed. The “simple well water” was replaced by the Living Water. Only Jesus can provide this; and now that Jesus is risen, He is ready to provide to any of us, the Living Water that will satisfy our thirst. He said to her: **“¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”** (John 4:14 NIV)

-When you are touched by divine presence, you will leave behind the “jar”.

When Peter faced Jesus fishing, hundreds of fish was in the net. He said, “stay away from me, I am sinner..”

You leave your jar behind, you leave your net behind.... You are in the presence of God.

“The King alone is able to satisfy the cravings of our heart and grant us joy that the disappointing circumstances of life cannot take away.”³

There is a treasure in the jars of clay.

4. My last example is from Thursday night in the Passion Week when **Jesus washed the disciples’ feet.**

It was the Passover meal. Usually slaves washed the feet of the guests. The water came in a vessel. Jesus changed the roles. He poured the water **in the vessel**, and the Lord of Lords, and the King of Kings knelt and washed the dirty feet of his disciples.

When Jesus touched the vessel, not only water flowed out, but also humility, grace, love, and servanthood. There is a treasure in the jars of clay.

Here is the Good News of Resurrection Sunday: Jesus Christ is our treasure.

Paul adds:

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. (2 Cor 4:10)

Because of the cross and resurrection, our earthly vessels, our jars of clay will carry in our body the suffering of our Lord.

Persecution will not stop, as long as we are in this world. Unfortunately, the evil will bring about suffering. Yet, when we suffer for Jesus, we carry in our body the “death of Jesus.” That is one side of the coin. Paul says, “...**so that Jesus will be revealed in our body.**”

The resurrected Christ will be revealed in us every day as we suffer.

He will be revealed in our businesses,

in our homes,

in our daily activities.

Something will change in our earthly, fragile, muddy jars of clay. The treasure of resurrected Christ will be revealed in our lives.

I read a story from the days when East Germany lived under an oppressive regime. A young man deeply involved in the life of a church community was seized by the Communist authorities, and never returned.

Sometime later, another young man, well known as a hardened leader in the Communist-organized youth movement, began attending youth meetings and worship services at the same church. The congregation’s suspicions were aroused, and the pastor took the fellow aside and asked why he was coming. The young man replied by asking, “You know the fellow from your church who was seized and taken away?”

“Of course,” responded the pastor. “I knew him well, but we have not heard from him since.”

“Well,” said the visitor, “I saw him when he was being harassed and tortured. Not only did he refuse to betray his friends, but through it all he never showed any bitterness toward his tormentors. Even in the hour of death, there was no anger towards those who were about to kill him. Instead, he spoke of Jesus Christ, forgiveness, and God’s love.” The young man concluded, “And when I saw him

die, I knew I must come, in spite of what it will cost me, to learn of his Christ and the love for our enemies that strengthened him in his last hours.”⁴

It is Resurrection Day. It is the day that proves that the earthly vessels, the jars of clay will fade away, and the everlasting treasure of Jesus Christ will appear in us.

It is Resurrection Day

This is center of our faith. Without resurrection, no meaning of our faith.

Paul in 1 Cor 15 If Christ is not raised, he reasoned, we are left with the following list of conclusions (1 Cor. 15:13–19):

1. Our preaching is futile.
2. Our faith is in vain.
3. We have misrepresented God.
4. We are still in our sins.
5. Our loved ones who have died have perished.
6. We are of all men most to be pitied.

I will finish with the encouraging words of Paul:

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”
(2Cor 4:16-18)

Thanks be to God, who gives us victory through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ!

1. Darrell L. Bock, *NIV Study Bible Commentary Luke*, P 607
2. Darrell L. Bock, *NIV Study Bible Commentary Luke*, P 607
3. Paul David Tripp, *Journey to the Cross*, P104
4. Donald Shelby, *Bold Expectations of the Gospel*, quoted by Joel D. Kline, *Who’s Holding on to Whom?*

Let me move to on another story of jars, the story of **the Prophet Elijah and the Widow at Zarephath.**

There was a drought. God instructed Elijah to visit this widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. Elijah arrived at this house and asked for food. The widow said, **“We have almost nothing in our jar. We are preparing our last meal then we are going to die.”**

God used Elijah to teach them that when God touches empty jars (jars of clay), new things will happen. Elijah said to her, “Go make the food.” Elijah told her what God had promised:

“The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.” (1Kings 17:14) and indeed,

“the jar of flour was not spent (used up), neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.” (1 Kings 17:16)

There is a treasure in the earthly, fragile, empty vessel.