

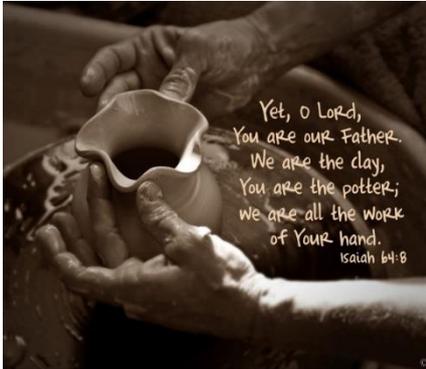
# VINEYARD HARVEST

## H O U S E C H U R C H



THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

THE WORD OF GOD



### The POTTER & THE CLAY – Rom 9.20,21

I see a Master Potter at work moulding clay to suit His design and purpose. He uses wisdom, understanding and knowledge (Prov 24.3, 4) to begin His work and soon applies patience, longsuffering and kindness and other aspects of His character (Gal 5. 22, 23) to His work as He moulds the clay into shape. Sometimes, His hands move roughly across the clay and applies pressure to the unyielding nature of the clay. The clay responds but only under pressure. The Master is careful not to overwork the clay that it becomes unusable. He adds water (the word) as needed to get the pliability that He needs into the clay so that He can shape it and form it. This

takes time. Not all of it is pleasant to watch from the outside.

The clay is in the Master's hands. It does not have any say in the matter as to what will become of it. It knows it is clay and needs a Master to mould it into shape. All previous work of the Master is visible for the whole world to see (2 Tim.2.20.) What it sees around the Master's studio is appealing to it but what it sees and knows is in the natural and so the clay is unsure of itself. What will I become, it asks? There is no answer. Can the clay speak to the Master who is forming it? Can it ask the Master, 'make me this or that'? It cannot see into the heart and mind of the Master who is the Creator. So, in its limited understanding, it asks to become something it should not be. The clay looks downward at the floor of the shop and sees many broken pieces of pottery strewn around the shop. It wonders. What happened here? I certainly do not want to end up like that; it thinks to itself. Yet, it does not have the power to decide which way it will all turn out for itself.

It is then that it looks up into the eyes of the Master in desperation and humility knowing that it is but a piece of clay. When the fear of that realization hits it, it sees beyond its circumstances in life and looks into the eyes of the Master pleadingly and then looks down to see what the Master is seated upon. He see the mercy seat. He knows now that there is hope for him. He looks back into the eyes of the Master and sees a gentleness and kindness that appeals immensely to it. The eyes hold something else that it gets glimpses of but is not sure as to what it is. The reason it is not sure is because it feels the hands of the Master on its body and finds that the moulding is sometimes good but mostly hard to take. It seems that at times He is applying undue pressure on it. So, the question often arises in its mind; does He love me or does He want me to end up as those broken pieces on the floor? It seems that the brokenness did not just come at a later stage when there was a near finished product but some of the pieces looked like they had been broken during the process of making it. That brokenness was even more concerning because it felt sometimes that there was no end to it. There was a lot on the floor. Being dumb, it could only go by what it felt not knowing the grand design.

The Master kept working on the clay not slumbering in anyway. At times, He would keep working through the night when it was the darkest of times. He knew that it was then that the clay was most pliable. He had a time frame that He had appointed to Himself and being a perfectionist He wanted to do a good job within the time frame because of appointed times. He knew that there would come a time when the clay could no longer be moulded. It would harden and become useless. Yet, He was a patient Master who had done this before and knew exactly what He was doing. The broken pieces on the floor were a reminder to Him about the outcome of the unpliant nature of clay. Yet, He persevered knowing that good was going to come out of His endeavours with the clay. Perfection had a price and He knew that only too well. He would gather the broken pieces later and put it in the fire. The cost of that was His own to bear.

He stopped and glanced around the walls of His house on the shelves where His workmanship and craftsmanship lay. His hands finally finished the clay He had in His hands. What stood before Him was a Masterpiece of His delight and He loved it. He kissed it with joy and love which sent streaks of life into the finished product as His breath entered the clay.

Though he was not fully finished, the product of clay now knew that something tremendous had happened to him. He had felt those streaks of life go through him that shook his very being and he began to realise that something called life was

entering his being. He was no longer a piece of clay but something of beauty to behold. He knew he had a long way to go and wondered at the outcome in anticipation of the finished work. If the Master could do this much to him and for him what would he be like in the future when the Master would finish the work He had started? Darkness had once again crept up and enveloped the studio. Yet, the light in the studio was bright as ever. Something was amiss though and the clay product felt that before he could be finished something quite expensive needed to be applied.

The Master looked at the shape of His creation and found some things were not quite right. In fact there needed to be a finishing touch that would cover up the unpliant parts of the clay and make it perfect. There were many cracks to contend with. The Master reached to the bowl by His side. He looked at the red coloured blood inside the bowl and dipped His finger in it to apply the blood on the clay. He applied the blood on the fault lines in the clay. The clay product noticed a glint on the corner of the Master's eyes. Was that tears he thought? He looked closer as the light caught the tears which sparkled out another deeper kind of light and then he saw in the Master's eyes what he had only glimpsed several times before when he was being kneaded and was not sure of what it was that he had seen. He saw the greatest thing ever in a vision unfold right before his eyes. He saw the love of the Master toward whom He had sacrificed to get this blood. It looked like the Master, in fact, it was the Master in another form laid out on a wooden cross nailed with a crown of thorns on His head. Water and blood poured out of His sides and collected in the bowl that was now next to Him. There were many clay products of all shapes and sizes around the cross and **each one had a mark on them**. Some were marked for a future and others were marked for death. A chill went through the clay product as he realized the truth. He suddenly knew that the cost of what was being applied on him was worth much more than he could ever repay. He felt worthless and without strength. How could he repay the Master for what He had done and what He was now doing? Suddenly, he felt the finger of the Master touch him with the cold wet liquid of the red dye. He now knew it was the Master's blood. Gently but firmly the Master applied the blood to all the faults in the clay. As soon as the blood touched the faults in the clay, the faults disappeared and where there was a weakness and a fault now there was strength, shape and form.

The clay product noticed that the tears were flowing freely now from the Master's eyes but as each tear fell, he also noticed a joy rising up as the clay product was being finished. The clay product wondered what that joy was in those tears. He had always associated tears with sadness but these were now tears of joy he was seeing. The earlier set of tears that had fallen in his observations had been collected in an endless glass bottle. There was no filling of that bottle but it seemed full and overflowing. Now, he was seeing the tears of joy falling but it was not going into a bottle. In fact he felt it fall on him as he began to hear laughter like he had never heard before. It sounded like a thousand Niagara Falls all falling at the same time. Rushing waters converging in one place creating a gigantic roar of joy. It resounded throughout the studio and now the clay product knew that there was another world outside of the studio. In fact he was sure of it as he noticed that the Master had lifted him of the table and had turned him toward the fire that suddenly appeared. Before he knew it, he was placed in the fire. He felt the intense heat of the flames as they enveloped him. Yet, he did not know if he was burning up or being formed because it was a very different sensation now. He had entered a whole new world.

He wondered if anyone knew about what he was going through internally as the Master worked on him. He felt alone. He also felt abandoned yet strangely secure in the fire. He knew somehow that the fire was for his good but it seemed that he went in and out of pain and suffering to great moments of joy. *He wondered about this fire*. He had felt safe and secure in the hands of the Master previously even through the kneading and the pulling. It was not so bad compared to the fire. He gazed through the fire at the Master wanting desperately to be back in His hands. He knew that was the safest place. Yet, it was an eternity away and he just did not know how to get back. He knew he just had to go through the fire and accept what it would bring. It took what seemed a very long time and then the fire stopped just as it had started. He looked upon himself and realised he was completed and what he saw he could not have imagined possible. **He looked exactly like the Master**.

Dear friends,

Maybe, you are wondering if you belong or if you are worthy. Maybe you feel alone at times and wonder if anyone really cares. Let me assure you that **God cares**. We are the work of His hands. He knows what He is doing. We just need to relax and let Him mould us and lead us into the future. His love knows no bounds and He is no respecter of persons. He has made us all in a unique fashion. Let Him change us into His image and help us reach the heights of His desire in us by submitting to His sovereign will. Let us run this race with patience and faith in love.

*Lots of love*

Pastor Noble

*03/05/2015*