

Monday

Genesis 3:14-15

December 3

The Woman's Offspring

"Because you have done this you are cursed . . ." (Genesis 3:14)

Everything happens so fast in the first three chapters of Genesis that if we don't intentionally slow down and take our time, we will miss foundational passages that answer timeless questions. Not surprisingly, Satan takes on the form of a snake. Speaking his native language, the devil lies to Eve. Because of his lie, the devil is cursed. There is no wiggle-room for him to slither away; the judgment has been pronounced and it is final.

As the slippery serpent continues to weave his way through creation, he's working hard to find a few to take along with him. Misery loves company and there are none more miserable than this ancient enemy. He wants you.

Fear not! The devil's head has been crushed! In a fatal confrontation with the Lord of Creation, the schemer went for broke. Working through traitorous Judas and stirring loathing in the hearts of a mob, he worked hard to get Jesus sentenced to death. Little did the fool know he was helping to put the final nail in his own coffin! It is through the death of Jesus that the judgment of the devil is finalized. Satan's reign of terror is over! Now is the time of Christ! The Offspring of the Woman sets us free forever.

Lord, judge the wicked foe; grant us deliverance from his influence. Amen.

Wednesday

2 Timothy 2:20-26

December 5

For Honorable Use

He will be a vessel for honor set apart & useful for the Master. (2 Timothy 2:21)

We are all vessels. Repositories of memories, knowledge, thoughts and desires, good works, information, evil deeds, hopes, dreams, hurts, and happiness. Like a cup holding water, we hold what is poured into us. Whether positive or negative, discouraging or uplifting, what is splashed and spewed into us have a way of shaping us. The negative comment from a teacher that kept you from ever trying in her subject again. The positive encouragement from your coach that pushed you forward.

The things we carry with us are profound and powerful, but there is nothing more significant than the grace poured into you by the Lord. Humble and cracked as you are, He has chosen you to be His holy vessel. He builds you up and restores you. He adorns you with righteousness and spills into you the full measure of His grace. Recreating you to be brand new, Jesus presents you to the world. To the world He delivers His Good Word through you, His lofty and beautifully made vessel. In Christ you receive the honor of carrying not just your past, but also your present and future in the Gospel.

Lord, make me your vessel for pouring out Your Good in the world. Amen.

Tuesday

2 Corinthians 4:5-7

December 4

Jars of Clay

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay . . ." (2 Cor 4:7a)

In this illustration from 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul picks up on the language of the Old Testament which refers to God's people as clay, the work of His hand (Is. 64:8). Here Paul is making the point that we are like everyday, earthenware jars rather than flashy chalices or vases. Amazingly, though, God has graciously chosen to fill us ordinary "jars" with priceless treasure—the Gospel of Jesus Christ! God has chosen you and me to be containers and bearers and bringers of the Good News that Jesus is the Light of the World which no darkness can overcome and the source of salvation for all who trust Him and His death and resurrection on our behalf. We don't deserve to bear this great Gospel treasure, but as with the ordinary people through whom the Lord worked in Bible times, the Lord can shine through us nonetheless!

Even more amazingly, your Almighty God chose to become a jar of clay for you! As God the Son became incarnate (taking on our human flesh), He became an ordinary man, Jesus of Nazareth. He did this so that He could be broken and poured out for you and your salvation at His cross!

Lord, thank You for the priceless treasure of Jesus in my life. Amen.

Thursday

Psalm 139:7-18

December 6

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

"You knitted me together in my mother's womb . . ." (Ps 139:13b)

Perhaps you have an artistic talent for knitting or sculpting or building things. You know the time and planning and attention it takes to arrive at the finished product. Or perhaps you, like me, marvel at the artistic abilities of others: the care and skill and imagination they pour into their creations.

David is *marveling* in Psalm 139 and inviting us to join him. God Himself is the Artist extraordinaire. His handiwork is all things, visible and invisible, but here the masterpiece in consideration is humankind. David marvels at how personally and intimately God creates us and knows us and loves us. God is not in the business of making generic things. Rather, each human life is a wonderfully unique creation—a masterpiece, whose value is determined by the Artist who made it.

Psalm 139 leads us to praise God for all His works, especially the gift of your body and soul and your neighbor's as well. Every person's life is precious in His sight, so precious that *Jesus* was fearfully and wonderfully made in Mary's womb, en route to giving His life for you and everyone! "Marvel now, O heaven and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth!" (LSB 332 v. 1)

Lord, lead us to treasure each human life just as You treasure us. Amen.

Friday

Isaiah 55:10-13

December 7

So Shall My Word Be

It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please. Isaiah 55:11

Agriculture is good, but it absolutely requires water. You can purchase the best seed, plant it in the most fertile of soil, and give it all the sun a day can provide, but if there is no rain, the seed will remain a seed. Water is required for the process that produces exponentially from the single grain. Because this is the design of the Lord, He knows the need and provides the rain. In sending the rain upon the land, the Lord brings forth fruit!

The same can be said of our faith. The Kingdom of God is said to be like a single mustard seed. When planted, it is miniscule, but given sunlight, fertile soil, and rain, it grows up larger than all other garden plants! The seeds of the Kingdom have been planted within you! The Kingdom of God is sown in the soil of your heart, made good by the constant teachings from Scriptures. Upon the seed shines the Light of Christ through faithful Law/Gospel preaching. Over the seed is poured out the water of Holy Baptism. The work the Lord intends to accomplish is to bring you in and keep you in the one true faith in Jesus! He speaks no wasted words, but works through each to nurture your precious faith.

Lord, pour your gifts upon me and accomplish your good will. Amen.

Saturday

Jeremiah 18:1-11

December 8

Like Clay in the Potter's Hand

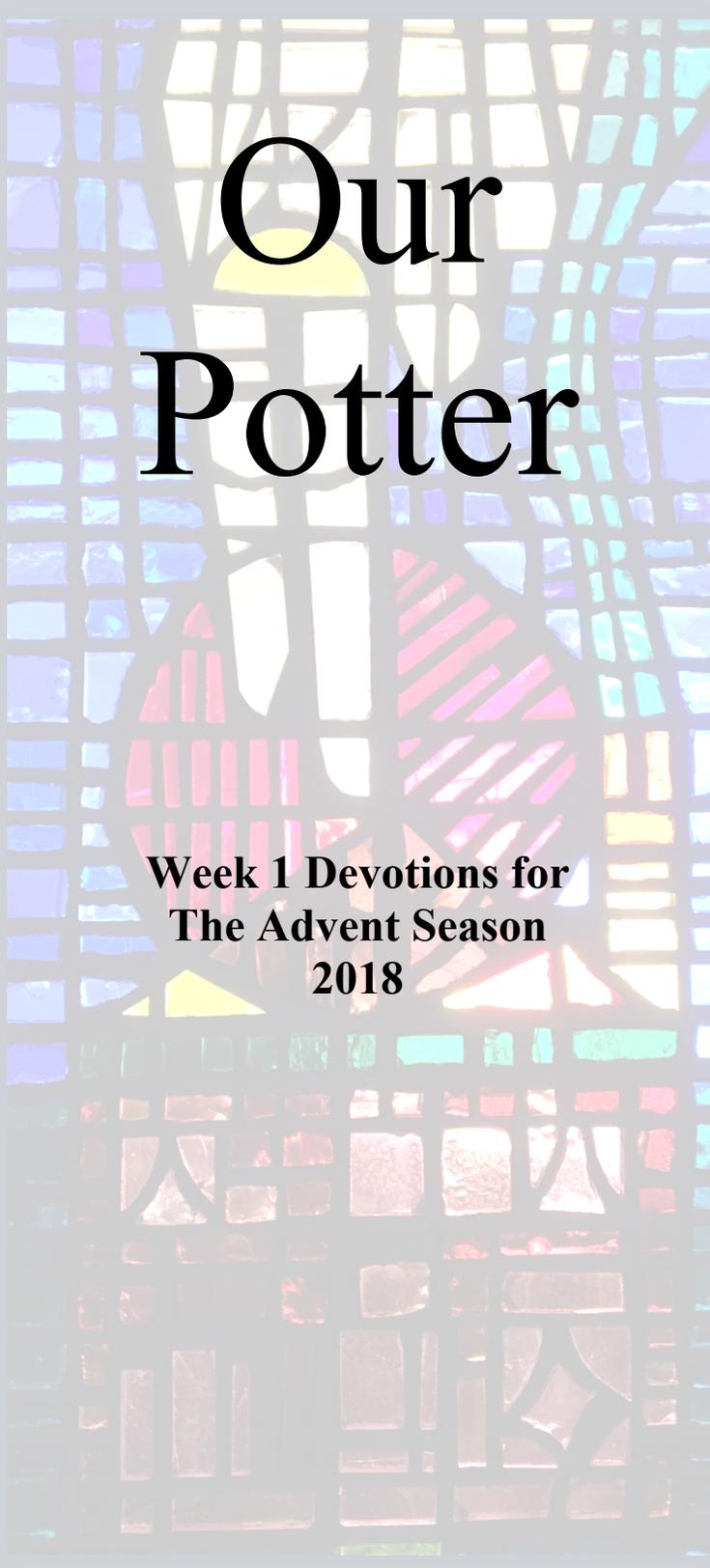
"Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand" (Jer 18:6).

The difference between a creature and the Creator is far more than we tend to think. While we normally wouldn't see many connections between ourselves and, let's say, a starling or a snail, we actually have *much* in common with the birds of the air or with creepy crawlies on the ground. Like them, we are merely creatures in our Creator's hands.

Today's reading from Jeremiah also makes it abundantly clear that *we* are creatures and that *God* is the Creator/Potter. We know this, yet how often do we confuse this distinction? We treat our Creator's Word and commandments like "suggestions." We want to think that we, mere creatures, have something to contribute to our salvation, some credit we can claim.

Jeremiah 18 is a message of repentance from our sovereign God. He is reminding us once more that He is God and we are not. He will move in our lives as He sees fit. He invites us to return to Him daily, reaffirm our God-given identity as His creations and His baptized children, and continue depending on Him to give us all we need to support this body and life.

Lord, thank You for making me Your creature. Teach me to recognize and gratefully receive all Your gifts to me, both for time and eternity. Amen.



Our Potter

**Week 1 Devotions for
The Advent Season
2018**