

# *Shaped In The Potter's Image*

**Bible Reading:**  
**Genesis 1: 26-31**  
**Mark 1: 14-20**

PREPARED BY  
KEN GEHRELS  
PASTOR  
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA  
ONTARIO, CANADA

We're in the middle of a sermon series for the season of Lent. The central image is that of a Potter. And a pot.

God is the potter.

We are the pot -

shaped deliberately and lovingly by the Potter;  
shaped - and care for.

Three weeks ago we learned that we were shaped by the Divine Potter to be in a relationship of joy and pleasure with Himself.

Last week we focused on the truth that

We are created to be connected to Jesus; intimately tied to Him;

**AND**

As much as we are connected to Jesus, in a joyful and pleasing relationship with Him;

**SO EQUALLY** we are created to be in a joyful and pleasing relationship with each other; with others who are connected to Jesus.

In fact,

the secret to living a joyful and pleasing life with God;  
experiencing His peace, and fulfilment and meaning in life  
- the key to that is Christian unity.

When believers live - carefully, purposefully - together  
united

the blessings of God flow.

When we stand apart from each other,  
or turn our back on each other  
or quietly ignore each other,

the blessings of God slow down, dry up, and disappear.

Psalm 133 proclaimed -

*How wonderful it is, how pleasant,*

*when brothers and sisters live together in unity...*

*In a united community*

*the LORD pours His blessing...*

1. We are shaped to be in a personal, joyful relationship with God.
2. We are shaped to live that relationship as a united community.

Today the third teaching about how we are created and shaped by the Divine Potter;  
about the purpose that He has for our existence.

It is this -

3. When you look at one of those shaped pots, you can't shake the feeling that somehow, be it even an ever so small way,  
     somehow  
         you are seeing something of the Potter.

The Potter is reflected in the pot.  
     His character.  
     His values.  
     His actions.  
         The Potter is reflected in the pot.

It is the old Christian doctrine of the *imago dei*, the *image of God*.  
 And it is actually one of the very first things that the Bible ever teaches.  
 Let's read about it -

### GENESIS 1: 26-31

God the Potter decides:    "*Let us make humankind in our image....*"  
     And did - male and female, in the image of God.

So - what does that phrase, *In our image*, mean?

One of the best rules to use in reading the Bible is to try and figure out what the first readers of *Genesis* would have understood by that phrase.

After all, they were the original ones for whom these words were written. If it would have made no sense to them, God would NOT have had it put down like that. And so....

What would an ancient Hebrew have understood by *image of God*?

One of the things that archeologists find around the sites of ancient civilizations are statues of the kings who reigned in those days. These images were erected by the king in various corners of his kingdom to remind people about Him.

When a person saw the image they saw, through that image, a picture of the King; the king's power and the king's work.

*Imago Dei - the Image Of God -*

The King of the Cosmos has placed images, likenesses, of Himself in the outposts of his empire

    to represent Him,  
     to make the statement that He is in charge.

Male and female, flesh and blood images,  
     living, thinking, responsible and creative images,  
     who were given the mandate of actually **doing** some of the work of the King on his behalf.

That's why Genesis 1 not only records God creating humanity, but also saying to them:

*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over... every living thing that moves upon the earth. (v.28)*

Our purpose on this planet is to responsibly and creatively develop it, and to carefully preserve it.

And, friends, we are responsible to the Cosmic King Himself for the outcome.

If you want to use the picture that is driving this sermon series -

We are living pots, created from the clay of the ground by the Divine Potter.

We are living pots created to act on behalf of the Potter.

We are living pots created to reflect the beauty and royal majesty of the Potter as we act on His behalf.

When you walk out the doors of Calvin Church, you are walking into the face of your purpose for living -

the place and time where you can serve as a representative of the Lord.

Your hands serving as His hands.

Your mouth serving as His mouth.

Your feet serving as His feet.

Can you see that?

Does that make sense?

As I was thinking about it this week

a voice in my head asked -

*"Are you hands doing actions that are a positive reflection on Jesus?*

*Are your feet going places where Jesus would be pleased to be seen?*

*Is your mouth saying words that are becoming of Him?"*

And I realized there are a bunch of different ways I could answer that.

I could say "Yes!" in some situations. And it makes those situations come alive in a whole new way. It brings a whole new, and much deeper, level of meaning to those situations. Be it even something as simple as speaking a kind word or smiling to the harried cashier at Tim Horton's. You bring a bit of peace and dignity into their life on behalf of Jesus. And what a great feeling that brings!

This is, then, what my life is about.

I represent Jesus.

In whatever things I do, big or small -

- I represent Him.

Brothers and sisters in faith, you can say the same thing.

You can say, *"I represent Jesus."*

*When I'm sitting in the waiting room at the doctor's office.  
When I lean back and chat with the person in the next office cubicle.  
When I strategize with the rest of the team in a policy meeting.  
When I lobby my MP.  
When I try to figure out my annual budget.  
When I skate across the blueline.  
I represent Jesus.*

Think about that as we open our bibles to the New Testament.

### **Mark 1:14-20 p.35**

Jesus walks through Galilee and spreads the words about the great King -

*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.*

And He begins to draw people into that Kingdom.

As a fisherman would draw fish into the boat with his net, Jesus draws people into the Kingdom of God.

Beginning with the disciples.

Everything changes when they encounter Jesus.

*Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.*

*Follow me* - nothing can ever be the same again once you encounter Jesus.

Life takes on a new meaning.

And it moves in very different directions.

*Follow me.*

"Follow the leader" - Remember the game? Where you walk behind and try to do EXACTLY what the leader does?

Well, that's what Mark 1 is talking about.

Follow the leader.

Holy Image Bearers - Follow Jesus.

You can't obviously get out of a boat and physically trot after him.

But that isn't the point.

*Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.*

In other words - followers become those who help draw other people into the same kingdom into which they, first, have been drawn into.

Those who have been drawn into the boat with the Lord, reach out to draw other people into the boat.

That becomes key to their lives as image bearers.

Worshipers at Calvin - that's key to our whole purpose for being alive.

Help bring other people into the Kingdom of God.

That happens when we help bring dignity and justice into their existence.

That happens when we introduce them to a personal relationship with Jesus.

That happens when we befriend them as we imagine Jesus would do.

*Follow me.*

I began with a reminder about the previous two messages in this series:

1. We are shaped to be in a personal, joyful relationship with God.
2. We are shaped to live that relationship as a united community.

And today, point 3:

3. We are shaped in the image of the divine Potter.

We are shaped to represent Him here on earth;

- a. to represent His claims of authority;
- b. to carry out His actions;
- c. to draw other people into His Kingdom.

Here's the last thing I want you to consider with me today about how we are shaped; the fourth item about imaging Him here on earth:

- d. We, pots shaped in the Divine Potter's image, would do well to contemplate how our characters, and tempers, and priorities reflect Him.

*Follow me* - said Jesus.

Friend, where are you headed after this morning's service?

Can you say that Jesus would be leading the way to go there?

How will you respond this week to the demands placed on you and to the requests made of you?

Can you say that Jesus would be leading the way in responding to those demands and requests?

Will you respond as He would?

When Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, one of the things that consumed a lot of His teaching and training time with them was teaching and training in the whole area of character formation.

So that not only would the disciples **do** things that were honoring to God.

They would also **be** honoring reflections of God.

Do you understand the difference?

I sometimes say to people in counseling situations -

You are **not** a human **doing**.

You are a human **being**.

Life isn't first of all about what you accomplish.

It's a whole lot more about what you are like inside.

It's not about what you **do**.

It's much more about who you **are**.

*Follow me, says Jesus.*

I read those words this week. And read them again.

And that little voice came back into my head and asked,

*So, Ken, as you're getting ready to walk onto that stage and teach about all this, who **ARE** you?*

And after some thought and prayer, the only really answer I could come up with was this -

*Jesus, I am yours.*

*And I don't ever want to be anyone else.*

That means Jesus is free to shape and twist and carve and squeeze me into any sort of character shape and size he wants.

My temperament.

My priorities.

My energy level.

Even the jokes I tell.

They are His.

He's got the copywrite on them.

And can do what He wants with them.

As I thought about that I realized in a fresh way that I can well count on  
and should NOT be surprised if

He shows up

regularly

often

to do some shaping and twisting and carving and squeezing in me.

And when He does, I have to make a choice.

Will I resist?

Or co-operate?

Friends, we can count on this -

If we resist, and keep resisting, we eventually won't feel or experience the presence and power of God's work in our lives.

My personal devotions this week brought me to Mark 6. I read there of Jesus returning to His home town.

The people listened to Him, and watched Him with stubborn doubt. I sort of suspect their arms were folded across their chests. And their mouths were frowning. Their attitude said, "*Go ahead and show me.*"

Mark 6:5 says "*And Jesus could do no deed of power there....*"

Did you hear that?

It **doesn't** say, "*And Jesus chose not to do any deed of power there...*"

It says, "*And Jesus could do no deed of power there...*"

He **couldn't**.

Their stubborn resistance and unbelief blocked the flow of divine power into their community and into their lives.

Stubborn resistance and unbelief can shut out the life-changing, joy-producing, fulfilment-bringing divine power of God.

It did it way back then.

It can still do so today.

So when Jesus shows up in the life of this "clay pot", I have to make a choice.

Will I resist?

Or co-operate?

Will I let Him sculpt and shape me?

Not just here on Sundays.

And not just for a month or two.

But day by day - over the long haul - year by year.

Will I allow other people, who are also image bearers, into my life?

Can I see their presence as something He is directing; and will I pay attention to what they tell me, and how they respond to me?

Can and will I accept that as God working on me?

Will I resist?

Or co-operate?

In the whole area of temptation, how will I respond?

When spam makes its twisted way through the filters and plops internet temptation on my desk, will I be tempted to have a peek, just a little one?

Will I resist the Holy Spirit's insistence on hitting the delete key?

Or co-operate?

What about struggles and challenges - how will I respond to those?

Will I crab and complain and allow them to turn me bitter?

Or will I look to try and find the hand of God who is able to take these things that Evil and a broken Creation throw my way - will I look to find the Hand of God take them, and turn them, somehow, either in the short-term or long-term, to some sort of good?

Will I resist?

Or co-operate?

And what about the Bible?

Ah, life can be so busy.

So when a moment comes to stop, TV offers pretty good programming.

Will there be time to contemplate Scripture's message?

And beyond just thinking about it - am I willing to put out the effort to try and assimilate what it says into how I live? Or will I listen to the little voice saying, "*Yeah, yeah.... but there is **reality** you know; can't always be like the book says.*"

Will I resist the Word of God?

Or co-operate with the sculpting work of the Potter?

Philippians 2:12-13 says:

*Therefore, my beloved.... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

Fellow pots - God is at work within us.

Will we take the time to notice it?

And, noticing, will we resist it?

Or co-operate?

God is at work **within** us.

And He calls us to be busy with the working **out** - the living out of what it means that we belong to Jesus.

That we are careful creations from the Hand of God.

That Jesus has walked into our lives and said, *follow me.*

Which He has.

He has walked into your life, my friend.

I know that for a fact, because otherwise you wouldn't be here today.

He has walked into your life.

And he has his hand reaching out to you.

To have a living, walk-along, joy-filled relationship with you.

You have the honor of imaging Him.

It's the purpose for which you were made.

It's why you are alive today.

It's your honor.

Friends, that's how the Potter has shaped things to be.

That's how the Potter has shaped **you** to be.

Can you see it?

Will you resist?

Or co-operate?