

# *Shaped To Please The Potter*

**Bible Reading:**

**Psalm 149: 1-5**

**Numbers 6: 24-27**

**James 4: 7-10**

**John 15: 9-17**

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Let us attend together to the Wisdom of God -

### Psalm 149:1-5

One of the greatest pleasures in the life of any parent is found in watching their child - pleasure in watching them learn and develop

- pleasure in watching them play
  - pleasure in sitting with them;
    - sitting quietly
    - or being silly
  - pleasure in watching them do, and succeed
- Pleasure in the life of a parent.

Friends, the biggest truth you can ever grab hold of

The truth that can shape and give

real fullness, contentment and peace into your existence

The truth that drives everything in our morning services through this season of Lent

Is the truth God takes that **same** pleasure in you.

The BIG truth,  
simple

and yet so very, very important

is that we are here to be in a relationship of joy and pleasure with our Creator.

Psalm 149:4:

*For the Lord takes **pleasure** in His people;*

*He adorns the humble with victory.*

*The Lord takes **pleasure** in His people.*

If there is no other sentence that sticks with you today, or for the whole season of Lent for that matter, let it be this one.

*The Lord takes **pleasure** in His people.*

And make sure that you accompany it with the second sentence -

*He adorns the humble with victory.*

Victory happens

Success is found

In the life of the humble.

This same message has an echo in the New Testament.

That echo is found in James 4 -

### JAMES 4:7-10

The Holy Spirit speaks through James to reflect the Old Testament message of the Lord taking pleasure in His people and gives to them accomplishment, success, victory in their life.

Their lives will count.

They are important.

The Lord gives that -

He gives that to **humble** people.

**Humble** people have the victory, the accomplishment, the sense of fulfillment in their lives.

**Humble** people have it.

James 4 echoes that message when it says -  
*Submit yourselves therefore to God....*

*Submit to God -*

That's echoed a few words later, when James 4 says:  
*Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you....*

And then again at the end -  
*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

Remember Psalm 149 -

*For the Lord takes pleasure in His people;  
He adorns the humble with victory.*

The biggest truth you can ever grab hold of  
The truth that can shape and give real fullness, contentment and peace into your existence  
Is the truth God takes pleasure in those who orient their lives to Him;  
who submit their lives to Him;  
who spin their lives in orbit around Him.

It's the BIG truth which is opposed, challenged, and in our incredibly wealthy and capitalistic and competitive Canadian society often obscured by the BIG lie.

The Big Lie tries to convince us that we are here for our own satisfaction and pleasure in life or for the satisfaction and pleasure of other people or institutions.

The Big Lie has consumed the lives of an awful lot of people, I'm afraid.  
And crippled the lives of many more.

The Bible passages for today,  
**if** we hear them,  
can help form a defense against that Big Lie.

They can help us find the real  
design and focus  
that our lives were meant to have; and in the process  
to experience  
the fullness  
the contentment  
the peace  
that we were meant to experience;  
that God wants us to be able to experience;  
and which we **can** experience  
**when**  
and **only when** we orbit our lives around His life.

The Big Lie -

It can come in a variety of different shades and colours.  
It can come presented in different types of packaging.

However it comes, it is aimed at getting our lives out of the divine orbit -  
spinning somewhere  
anywhere  
**except**  
around the Lord.

**ANYTHING**

**except**

living out of the truth that...

*...the Lord takes pleasure in His people;  
He adorns the humble with victory.*

It tries to tell us that life is about something, anything..... except this.

Sometimes the packaging of the Big Lie tries to communicate to us that we are here only for this one trip round this one planet. Then we die. That's it. That's all. Done.

The Bible paints a very different picture. What we're living here is a prelude to the next world. Our 30, 60 or 90 years in this creation prepares us for an eternity in the New Creation. There we will experience no more tear, no more suffering, no more sin and no more death. We will experience the perfect and near and unclouded presence of God.

*The dwelling of God will be with humanity, and He will be with them. And God will wipe away every tear from their eye..... the old order of things will have passed away.*

That's the promise waiting for those who, in this trip of life, discover and live out their true purpose and direction and place in life -

in humble orbit around the Lord.

Who realize that even as they live here, carrying a paper passport that identifies them as Canadian, they have stamped on their heart their true identity -

*Citizen of Heaven* (Phil 3:20).

Who are willing to line up and run the race of their life along the same track as all the heroes of faith described in Hebrews 11 -

people who knew that what you see is **NOT** necessarily what you get.

There's much, much more beyond what you see.

As the bible says about them -

*they were waiting for a better country - a heavenly country. So God is not ashamed to be called their God, because He has prepared a city for them.* (Heb 11:13,16)

That's why we can say about believers who die in faith -

*They went home.*

Psalm 149:4 has become eternal reality for them:

*...the Lord takes pleasure in His people;  
He adorns the humble with victory.*

The Big Lie, and the Big Liar behind the lie, tries to distract us from that.

He tries to spin our lives away from where they were designed to be, the only place where they can find fulfilment and real peace -

in orbit around our Creator God.

And so Satan tries to distract us.

Sometimes through guilt.

There people who run their who lives driven by guilt. Perhaps there is an incident in their past that leaves them filled with shame. Perhaps regret. And Satan tries to dangle memories, tugging at them, dragging them down.

*If people found out,* the Evil One whispers.

*God can't REALLY forgive YOU,* he taunts.

And sometimes eating disorders, self-mutilation, addictions, sexual promiscuity and adultery or other destructive behaviours result.

People begin to destroy themselves.  
And Evil smiles.  
It smiles because it has managed to spin people away from the cross;  
away from the Son of God.

I think all of us have heard some talk about Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion*.

People allege that it is too gruesome. Nonsense. Floggings, torture and crucifixions in Roman times were every bit as bloody, and much more.

People say it is a hate fest against Jews. Nonsense. The Son of God suffered so horribly, you see, for he carried the condemnation of **all of us** on himself.

**He** took our guilt.

Our past, our shame, our failures - they belong to Him, now.

His Passion was for our salvation.

His suffering was for our freedom.

If we can bow in humility before Him,  
surrender our lives to Him  
place our lives in orbit around the cross  
then  
no matter WHAT our past  
the words of Psalm 149:4 are ours -  
*...the Lord takes pleasure in His people;  
He adorns the humble with victory.*

and we will find peace.

But the Big Lie tries to get us to forget that.

So it reminds us of ways in which others have hurt or cheated or disappointed us. And it tries to get our lives to revolve around these things.

If it succeeds it gives us ulcers, heart attacks, broken relationships.

It may even kill us.

It robs us of any peace, any joy.

Often the Big Lie tries to get us spinning in an orbit that is seeking, chasing approval.

I can't tell you how many people I've worked with over the years who didn't have, at some level, a craving to receive approval from other people.

Often it was because of something lacking in their parental home.

A father who was harsh and never praised them.

A mother who was distant.

And long after these people are dead, the now-grown child still is trying to show them that they matter.

One person I knew drove himself hard - two doctoral degrees, faculty position at a prestigious school, and a very successful professional life. At a moment of real honesty he said, with tears streaming down his cheeks - "*I've shown them. They didn't think I could, but I did it. I AM good enough!! I did it.*" He said those things, unaware of the chains wrapped around his heart - chains of seeking, chasing approval.

Unaware that if he would only humble his life before Jesus there wasn't a SINGLE THING he had to **do**.

Nothing he needed to **prove**.

Just surrender to the Lord.

Just surrender into the arms of the Saviour, and then see the smiling face of the Father, saying

*"Welcome home, my child."*

The Big Lie tries to get away from that.

Sometimes by the stupid line that *the one with the most toys wins*.

Hah!

How much do you need?

How far up the ladder must you go?

The Lie doesn't say - because it's **never** enough!  
More will **never** give you the fulfillment you seek,  
or the peace you crave.  
**Never!**

Opposed to that Big Lie is the Big Truth  
*...the Lord takes pleasure in His people;*  
*He adorns the humble with victory.*  
Lives in orbit around Him.

The Big Truth is pictured for us in Revelation 4. There our blinders are removed, the veil is peeled back, and we are privileged to get a little glimpse into eternity. In Revelation 4 we see living creatures and the elders of heaven bowing before the throne of God. They say to Him:

*You created everything.....*  
*....and it is for your pleasure that they were created and have their being.*

[v.11]

Other translations have that worded this way:

*You created all things,*  
*and by your will they were created and have their being.*

The Greek original uses the same structure to say that it is made **by** God and it is made **for** God. One English translator chose one word. The other chose the second. Which is the truth?

Ultimately, **both** are right.

Check out Genesis 1 & 2

Remember, if you can think back that far, to the sermon series from there.  
God has created all things.  
We are not an accident.  
We didn't **just** happen.  
We are a **deliberate, designed** product of God's creative work.  
We are made **by** Him.

Like a lump of clay is molded thoughtfully, carefully and artistically by the potter into a vessel, so we and all creation with us  
wash molded thoughtfully, carefully and artistically by the Divine Potter.

We are also made **for** Him.

Elsewhere the Bible says this -  
*“:so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* [1 Cor 10:31]

For the glory of God.  
Him at the centre.  
Our lives in orbit around His.  
Pots for the pleasure and use of the Potter.

That's the real truth  
for real fulfillment  
for real peace  
for real meaning in our lives.

So let me encourage you on this first Sunday in Lent to orient your life that way.

And then begin to structure your life in that kind of an orbit around the Lord.

You can help develop a God-centred orbit in your life through building in regular times of worship.

Gather with other God-orbiting people for corporate times of praise, song, scripture and prayer.

And during the week, take time to say *Thank You* prayers to the Lord. Take time to have prayer conversations with Him. Take time to read from His Word. Take times where you quietly and simply acknowledge that He is with you.

I shared with you a few weeks ago the title of an old book that describes how to do this, very simply but very powerfully. It was written by a Christian whose whole life was spent working in a kitchen as cook. His name was Lawrence. But he lived in that kitchen with deep peace and joy. Because he lived in that kitchen with Jesus.

You may want to read his book, *Practicing The Presence Of Christ*.

By Brother Lawrence.

You can help develop a God-centred orbit in your life through giving devoted attention and care to other people, and doing so with a deliberate awareness that they are, just like you, the object of God's affection...

.... which is **why** it is worth your time and effort to care for them.

You can help develop a God-centred orbit in your life through acknowledging the abilities, the talents and the opportunities of your life and seeking to develop them in a meaningful manner;

a manner that we dedicate to our Heavenly Father.

You can help develop a God-centred orbit in your life through helping other people discover the Big Truth for their life; and unmasking the Big Lie.

This year Mel Gibson's *The Passion*, and the movie *The Gospel Of John* are both playing - at the same time at Kanata's AMC 24, actually. There's a good conversation starter for you with your colleagues and neighbors.

You can help develop a God-centred orbit in your life through valuing what He values and structuring your life's activities accordingly – even if it doesn't immediately feel gratifying or fun..... even if it hurts!

Listen carefully to these words of Jesus. Hear what he says about obedience to His will, doing what he says, and abiding in His love.

#### **John 15:9-17**

*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.  
If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love....*

*I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.*

The beginning of a joy-filled life is in knowing that Jesus loves us.

**That's** the big truth.

The challenge is to live out of that truth.

To revolve everything around it.

That's what Jesus means by "*abide in my love.*"

Do what He wants.

Keep Him at your centre.

As you do,

and as that becomes a pattern, a habit  
you'll find that life becomes more settled.

Your heart becomes more peaceful.

Your mind is less dominated or controlled by fears, by wants, by resentments.

You are experiencing

deep  
and true  
God-given  
**JOY.**

On this first Sunday of Lent, brothers and sisters in faith, I call you to join me in a pilgrimage to Christ-centred living.

This is what we were designed for.  
This is where our meaning will be found.  
This, and only this, is where we will find peace.