

In my office I have this wonderful chalice. It is meant to remind us of the cup that Christ used at the Last Supper. There is also a picture on the front of a fish and a basket of bread to remind us of the time that Jesus fed the five thousand with just five loaves of bread and two small fish. This cup was a gift from my mother. She bought it for me in a town called Assisi in Italy. There is a tag on the bottom that says it was “hand made.” Well today in his word God tells us that we are all hand made. Today Isaiah says, **“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)** Today we will focus on the theme God is the Potter. He molds us by his word. And he will mold us in the resurrection.

First, God molds us by his word. Our passage starts out: **“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!” (Isaiah 64:1-2)** The Israelites had been suffering at the hands of their enemies and so they say, “LORD, wouldn’t it be great if you would tear open the heavens and come down and terrify all our enemies and deliver us!” And Jesus will someday tear open the heavens and come down. The book of 2 Thessalonians says that **“the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels” (2 Thess 1:7)**. But the question might occur to you, “Am I ready for Jesus to tear open the heavens and come down? It says that the mountains will tremble before him. You might ask, “Won’t I tremble in fear before him because of my sins?”

But Jesus wants us to be prepared for the day of his coming. And so before he tears open the heavens and comes down in a blaze of fire, Jesus in his grace first comes to us in a quiet way, in his *word*. Just like in our gospel for today Jesus came to the Emmaus disciples very peacefully. He very peacefully engaged the Emmaus disciples in conversation. Our gospel for today said, **“Jesus himself came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’” (Luke 24:16-17)** And as they walked along Jesus molded their minds using God’s word. It says, **“Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27)**

Jesus also comes to us in his word and molds our minds. First Jesus molds our understanding of ourselves. The Bible tells something about ourselves. It tells us that we are sinful. Isaiah says, **“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6)** Notice that Isaiah doesn’t say “Some really bad people have become like one who is unclean.” He says **“All of us have become like one who is unclean.” (Isaiah 64:6)**. Back in Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah found himself in the throne room of God and he suddenly felt very self-conscious because of his sins. He cried out **“Woe to me for I am a man of unclean lips!” (Isaiah 64:6)** Has your mouth ever uttered a curse word? Has your mouth ever said anything mean about someone else? Has your mouth ever gossiped? We all are people of unclean lips, not fit to be in the presence of God.

We might sometimes think that we are good people, but God’s word molds our understanding of ourselves. It says that even **“all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6)** If we are honest with ourselves even the good things that we do are often done because we’re afraid we might look bad if we don’t do them or because we want other people to think we’re really great. Jesus once said, **“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.” (Matt 6:1)** If we were honest, we’ve often done righteous things only so that we are noticed by others. In his word Jesus molds our understanding of ourselves.

But in his word Jesus also molds our understanding of his love. On the Emmaus road Jesus said to the disciples, **“Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things.” (Luke 24:25)** Jesus became the unclean one on the cross. Not that he had committed any sin but he took all of the uncleanness of our sins onto himself. The Bible says that **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor 5:21)**. Jesus washed us of all our uncleanness. Ephesians 5 says, “Christ loved the church and gave

himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” (Ephesians 5:25-26) Ananias told the newly converted Apostle Paul, “Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away.” (Acts 26:16). Jesus has washed all your uncleanness away so that in his eyes you are sparkling and spotless. By his word Jesus molds our understanding of his love.

It is God’s word that reveals these things to us. Jesus used *God’s word* to reveal the truth to Emmaus disciples. Without *God’s word* we would be blind to spiritual truth. Isaiah says, “**Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you.**” (Isaiah 64:4) The apostle Paul picks up on this passage in 1 Corinthians 2 and says, “**As it is written “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” — the things God has prepared for those who love him— <sup>10</sup> these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.**” (1 Cor 2:9-10) God’s word reveals to us that he has wonderful things in store for those who love him. And one of these wonderful things is the resurrection of the body. We’ve seen that God molds us by his word. Now we will see that he will mold us in the resurrection.

Isaiah says, “**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) Do you remember how God made the first human, Adam? God made Adam out of the dust of the ground. It says in Genesis chapter 2:7 “**Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.**” Just like a potter, God formed the man and then breathed into him to make him a living being.

Now God made Adam to live forever. But God said to Adam, “If you disobey my command and eat from this tree in the middle of the Garden, you will surely die.” And of course Adam did disobey God’s command and he died. And we have disobeyed God’s commands and so we die too. Isaiah says, “**we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.**” (Isaiah 64:6) Because of our sins we are all broken pots. But the Potter has promised to remold our bodies in the resurrection. And when he remolds our bodies in the resurrection we will be new and improved.

When a manufacturer comes out with a new product, he first makes one. And then if he likes that one, then he makes many more of that same product exactly like that first one. That first product is the pattern for all of the other ones. And all the other products are made just like that first product. Well, God raised Jesus’ body from the dead. And Jesus’ resurrected body is glorious and immortal and imperishable. And Jesus’ resurrection body is the pattern that God the Potter will use to form all of our resurrection bodies. In the resurrection God the potter will mold our bodies so that we are glorious and imperishable and immortal. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15. “**Just as we have borne the image of the earthly man (Adam), so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man (Jesus Christ).**” (1 Corinthians 15:49) God is going to use Jesus’ resurrection body as the pattern for our resurrection bodies so that are our bodies are glorious and immortal and imperishable like Christ’s resurrection body.

And when will God do this? Paul says, “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” (1 Cor 15:52) When Jesus Christ tears the heavens open and returns, he will remold our lowly bodies so that they are like his glorious body. And so Isaiah’s prayer becomes our prayer. We say to Jesus with longing eyes: “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,” and remold our lowly bodies so that they are like your glorious and immortal body. And Jesus will do that because we are the clay and he is the Potter. Amen.