

Summit Church, 12/27/20

Unlikely Vessel

2 Corinthians 4:6-7

The year was 2013. Dori Rhoades and her family decided it was time to make a little extra cash, clean out the closets, get rid of some junk. That's right, they decided it was time for a yard sale.

As her family began to pile up all the things they were collecting in their small garage. As things were piling up, her kids asked her "Mom, what isn't any of YOUR JUNK in here?" Fair question. She figured she would add to the sale as well.

So, up the stairs she goes, where she grabs a few things and puts them in the pile. One of those items was an old denim jacket. No big deal. Just your normal, run of the mill, John Muller-esque denim jacket. Knowing she hadn't worn it in a while, and that, just like everything in America these days, what was once in style, went out of style, and is now BACK in style again. She quickly grabbed the jacket and threw it in the pile to be sold the next morning at the yard sale.

At some point in the morning, she haggled back and forth with a young, cool millennial. She was asking \$25, which sounded like a price too steep for a yard sale denim jacket. The buyer wanted nothing to do with it, so like any good negotiator, she got the price down to \$20.

SOLD!!! She was pumped. She got rid of some junk, and she made some cash in the process.

It wasn't until later on during that afternoon when she realized she had just made the biggest mistake of her life.

Why? Well, like many of us, Dori had some fears. What are some of your greatest fears? Snakes. Plain and simple. Like, with a passion. For Dori, one of her biggest fears was that someone would come to her house and steal her stuff. So, like anyone with that kind of fear, she wanted to ensure that she kept her valuables in a place that a possible thief would never find it.

So surely, the pockets of an old denim jacket would be the perfect hiding spot for, I don't know..... her diamond earrings, a wedding ring, and some cash that she had been saving up to surprise her family with a vacation.

That day, she sold her rickety old denim jacket for \$20. The contents in the pocket? Valued upwards of \$20,000.

People have a tendency to hide treasures in places that are strange. Unlikely.

- Shoe boxes.
- Underwear drawers
- Behind books on a bookshelf.
- In the pockets of old denim jackets.

Something of great value to you being stored in unlikely places.

What I'm getting ready to say may be the biggest understatement of the century, but **"WHAT A WEIRD YEAR"**

- Normal rhythms of life have been shaken up.
- I mean, your parents are always yelling at you to get off your phone, off the computer, quit playing video games. But this year....they were like "whatever it takes to get you out of my hair for a few minutes...just go!"
- Parents are watching kids school sports on zoom.
- And at the beginning of 2020 it was Toilet Paper that was impossible to find. At the end of 2020, it was an affordable, real Christmas tree. I mean. C'MON MAN!
- Even Dude Perfect had to switch things up for a while. I thought those guys were untouchable!
- And y'all, can we just go all the way back to January.....Kobe Bryant. I'm still in shock.

Weird days friends..

What if, through the chaos of 2020, God has been at work underneath the layers of the chaos, where he's been shaping you, preparing you, changing you, **unlikely vessels with an unrivaled message** to make the name of Jesus famous with your life?

{ TRANSITION }

In **2 Corinthians**, The Apostle Paul is writing another letter to the followers of Jesus in a city called Corinth. These people

are people that Paul really cares about, but man they gave my man some serious heartburn. You have people like that in your life? Ones you really love, but just wanna smack in the head? I have 3 of them: ages 12, 9, and 7.

The Corinthians have started to believe some messed up stuff, and they were led to believe that because Paul was a broken human being ...didn't didn't talk they way they thought he should talk, didn't look the part, dress the part, etc..) that he couldn't really be one of God's guys. "Who would entrust such great treasure to such an average guy? There's no way, they thought.

Paul reminds them that the gospel lives in unlikely people, and it shines brightest in difficult and unlikely times. Let's read it together.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Two very simple things I want us to see today. Paul reminds the Corinthian church of two things: Your possession and your proclamation.

I. Our Unique Possession:

"We have this treasure...."

- the word used here in the greek is *present tense*. *That means.... NOW.*

If you were to just take a second, right where you are, and thought about the last 5 minutes. 5 minutes ago you probably had something in your possession that you do not currently have right now. Maybe a blanket. A phone. A glass of sweat tea. You had it, but now you don't.

The great thing about the gospel is that you don't have it....and then you don't. It doesn't just disappear. It's locked deep in the recesses of your heart.

The hope and glory of the gospel is not just a hope for the future. *It is* an eternal hope. But it's not *just* an eternal hope. It's HOPE now. It's life altering NOW. It's life shattering NOW. It's life giving.....NOW.

Jesus would say it this way "I have come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly!" (John 10:10)

Jesus did not come to make life miserable for you, he came to bring joy. Unspeakable joy. In all seasons.

Now, ***what I'm not saying is that Jesus came to make your life comfortable and pain free.*** That's not it .EXHIBIT A: Hebrews 11.The Great Hall of Faith. When we read that chapter, we tend to focus on the ones that saw God "shut the mouths of lions," but we forget the other ones listed that, because of their faith, they had some pretty bad things happen to them. Some of them lost their life because they refused to deny their greatest treasure.

Listen closely... Jesus did not say you'd be safe and comfortable following him.

What I am saying is that whether you walk through the valleys that feel like the shadow of death OR as you stand upon the mountain top and feel like you've been at the feet of Jesus... you have the same treasure. **You possess Christ.** And in Christ, you are enough. Because Christ is enough.

Jesus is our great possession. He is our greatest treasure, and that treasure isn't just a flicker of light at the end of the dark tunnel, Jesus, our great treasure illuminates every dark corner of that tunnel.

Has the enemy grabbed a hold of your mind and driven a wedge of DOUBT where trust used to exist? He's got to go. Not today Satan. Don't let him take a weapon of your worship (your mind) and let him turn it into a weapon of destruction.

If God. Can God. Where is God? We begin to forget that we POSSESS the greatest treasure that nothing can take away. Signed. Sealed. Delivered.

How do I take hold of the treasure daily? I started this year off with this, I'm ending it with this, and I'm rolling into 2021 with it as the banner of my life. And I'm going to say it again, and again, and again.

Eyes on Jesus. EOJ. I don't have a tattoo, mainly because I don't have any muscles. But I'm pretty sure that when I get some muscles, i'm getting ink. And it will say "EOJ."

That's always been the cure for distraction and discouragement. And not just the cure prescribed by me. It's the cure prescribed by God himself.

Lift your eyes. Set your eyes. Fix your eyes. Behold. Remember.

Ps. 121:1-2 "I lift my eyes toward the mountains.
Where will my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth."

Hebrews 12:1-2 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith."

Struggling to believe that you possess a great treasure within because of sin you've allowed to creep in? **Eyes up.**

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us - Psalm 103:12

The steadfast love of the lord never ceases, his mercies are new every morning, great is his faithfulness towards you.
Lamentations 3:22-23

Don't you let the enemy try to dim the light of Christ in you. How rich a treasure you possess, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. The Unique Messenger

We have something to say to the world...**even when you don't feel qualified to do so.**

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Now here's the crazy thing...we hold this GREAT TREASURE in a dirty old beat up jar. One that is that's fragile. Fading. Passing Away. Like, if you were to go into your garage and look at the nasty, beat up, stinky, pile of shoes that are gathered up by your door.....Paul's like....THAT IS US!!

The clay pot. The jar of clay. Average. Everyday. Run of the mill. Not polished. Not fancy. The imagery Paul gives you here is something that everyone had in their homes. It's like saying

"You've got \$1 million stashed in your shoe pile in the garage!
WHO DOES THAT?!?!?

GOD. And the best part? He takes great joy in it.

Isn't that the way Jesus came? Not in riches, but in a lowly manger. Not through an earthly ruler in power, but through the lowliness of two obscure people. Not in one of the great cities. But in Po-Dunk Bethlehem.

God does the same with us. God put his greatest treasure, the hope of the gospel in our hearts. US. Me. You. Broken. Imperfect. Unsuspecting. Ordinary people.

Aren't you glad that human weakness is no barrier to the purposes of God!

That's what God does. That's his strategy to reach your school. To reach your friends at work. To reach your neighbors. Your friends on your sports teams. And the world. So no one but him gets the glory, **he puts his perfect treasure in an imperfect people.**

Feeling underqualified? Take courage. Welcome to the bus stop and good luck finding an empty seat when you get on. It's crowded with imperfect people on the Jesus bus. Check this out.

Peter: The leader and spokesman of the 12 disciples. The one who's confession Jesus would build his church upon. But really, when you get down to it, he's a little bit of a goober.

- Denied Jesus multiple times and then God uses him to set the world on fire in the book of Acts. His life was a life of UPS and downs. Over and over.
- Most people looked at him and thought "Total noob."
- No, he's just a CLAY POT.

David: A man after the heart of God

- Had it all. But then he blew it. Messed up with a relationship he shouldn't have been in.
- Plotted and succeeded, like someone in the Mafia, to have someone killed.
- Somehow, God used him to make his glory known.
- He's just a CLAY POT.

Moses, stuttering speech, quick temper, yet he was the man chosen by God to lead God's people out of the cruel hand of Pharaoh. He was just CLAY POT.

Jonah, ran away from God. **Job** had all the cash and all the land. But then he lost it all. BROKE. Clay pots.

YOU. ME. Broken. Imperfect. Yet, God.

God values us clay pots enough that he would put the greatest treasure the world would ever know deep into the recesses of your heart.....so that you may make known the light of Christ everywhere that you go. In every season that you go through.

2020 may have you feeling pressed. But can I tell you something, In Christ you're not crushed. Not abandoned. You may feel Struck down, but you're not destroyed.

That's our message. Never get over the treasure that is Christ.

Now, go put your eyes on Jesus and tell the world about this great treasure.