**Culmore United Methodist Church**

**June 30, 2019**

**Pastors:** *Rev.* *Nelson Neil, Rev. Beth Neil*

**Music:***Dr. Wonhee Kang, All Nations Choir*

 *Emily & Ann Johnson*

**Personal Reflection**: You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending. ― ***C.S.******Lewis***

You are in my hands just like clay in the potter’s hands.—***Jeremiah 18:6***

# **Prelude** *Here I Am to Worship* **W&S 3177**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Happy birthday, Juan Carlos!** Are there other birthdays this week? If so, let us know so we can wish you many happy returns.

**MAP is up and running at Culmore.** This FREE health clinic is open on Thursdays between 7:00AM – 2:00PM. Since there are a limited number of appointments available each Thursday, come at 6:00 AM to ensure you can be seen. The only requirement is that you come.

**Bible Study** is Wednesday, July 7 at 10:00, as we continue our study of Hebrews.

We’re continuing our series on *Transforming attitudes.*

These are the attitudes WE are to work on

—this is OUR work, to grow us closer to God.

One *transforming attitude*

that will help us grow our faith is

**looking for joy,**

looking up rather than down.

This gives us a heart full of hope

 and opens us up to seeing more blessings around us.

Because we DO tend to find what we’re looking for.

Another *transforming attitude*

can come out of **troubled times** in our lives.

Being in troubled times wakes us up to the realization

 that God is there with us

—that God has bigger and stronger shoulders than ours,

and we can lean on him.

God is always there in the midst of our joy

 as well as our times of hardship.

Today we’re looking at the *transforming attitude*

of ***trusting in God*****to shape us**…

accepting his molding of us.

For as we read in **Jeremiah 29: 11**

For I know the plans I have for you,”

 declares the Lord,

“plans to prosper you and not to harm you,

plans to give you hope and a future.

We want to lean into this promise

and allow God to shape us in ways

that will prosper and not harm us,

in ways that will give us hope and a future.

**Passing of the Peace**

**Lesson for the Young and Young at Heart**

**Charcoal to diamond. –pictures**

We’re all based on carbon

 –remember from HS chemistry

—organic versus inorganic.

Carbon is the dividing point.

No carbon, no life.

**Carbon**—plain old carbon is

soft, dull, not very pretty.

But over time, under great pressure,

it changes into DIAMONDS,

clear substances,

the hardest substances in the world.

Sparkles, it’s beautiful.

It’s still pure carbon,

but what a difference.

Our essence remains the same,

but the form,

the shape changes

as God the master potter shapes us.

**When you’re young,**

 your parents are always trying to mold you.

What would they do to shape your behavior?

Warnings.

Send to room;

ground you;

sometimes no dessert after dinner.

They knew we needed consequences

to get us to change our ways

. ..even if the process was hard and at times painful.

Without that shaping and molding,

our parents knew we wouldn’t grow up

to be “all that we could be,”

to reach our full potential as adults.

It’s no different with God shaping us.

Let’s read the **Isaiah reflection**

on the front of the bulletin.

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father.
    We are the clay, you are the potter.
    We are all the work of your hand

**Opening Prayer:**

Loving God, we are constantly being molded,

whether we know it or not.

Hardships or joys, happy relationships or bad

—they all shape us.

Sometimes we end up bruised and battered,

wishing we could be different.

Lord, show us that different way. Let the power of your Holy Spirit and the wisdom of your Word be what molds us. Make us anew. We are in your loving potter’s hands. *Amen*

* **Hymn** *Change My Heart*  **TFWS 2152**

Somebody or something is going to mold us,

whether we notice it or not.

We are constantly getting shaped

and reshaped by people and places

and things around us.

The question for us is

***whose shaping are we going to accept?***

Did you ever hear these lines:

I am the master of my fate,

     I am the captain of my soul.

(from the poem William Henley wrote – *Invictus)*

That sounds really, really good:

*I am the master of my fate.*

*I am the captain of my soul.*

I’m in charge!

I control what happens to me.

…Yeah, right.

It is SO not true.

Innocent bystanders in a drive-by shooting.

Do you remember the **sniper attacks in 2002** in DC

when two men drove around the area,

and randomly killed 10 people in drive-by shootings?

Just because…

I remember the panic I felt,

trying to figure out the pattern:

who were they targeting?

What kind of car were they driving?

Where were the attacks happening,

so that I could stay away from there?

**Freak accidents.**

Just this week a woman in Fairfax

was taking a walk through the local park

…when an oak limb from an 80 foot tree

 fell on her, killing her.

Who could have seen that coming?

How could she have prevented it?

Yes, there are some things we have control over.

Yes, there is most definitely work for us to do

…but we are not in absolute control of our lives.

It’s a fiction that doesn’t hold up in daily life.

So that also means we are ALSO not in charge of God.

We don’t command God.

But sometimes we act like we think we do.

The prophet Jeremiah brings us up short

with this kind of thinking.

Let’s hear:

**Scripture** Jeremiah 18: 1-5

**1st Reader:** This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: *"Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words."*

**2nd Reader** : So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, shaping it as seemed best to him.

**1st Reader:** Then the word of the LORD came to me: "*Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter does? Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand.*

Can the Lord not do as he pleases with us?

He shapes us;

we the clay CERTAINLY do not shape the potter.

How ridiculous to think otherwise.

Maybe we don’t particularly like

the way the molding is going,

but who are we to question the master potter?

**Responsive Reading: Romans 8: 24-28**

Now hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?

**But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.**

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

**And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit…**

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

**We know that all things work together for good, for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.**

What a promise!

That no matter how fierce the pressure,

 the painful the remolding process,

whether we understand God’s plan or not

 “we know that all things work together for good,

for those who love God,

who are called according to his purpose.

**Now…how *do* we end up being the person we are?**

Did we magically appear,

in the form we are,

with the personality we have,

or did we evolve over time and circumstances?

**Of COURSE** we’ve been influenced, shaped,

 tweaked, battered, scarred,

streamlined by

 people, places and events

we’ve encountered or experienced.

Sometimes we need to stop, take stock of how we’re doing….

Do we like this person that we are?

Are there parts that we’d want to change?

Even more to the point

are we the person God wants us to be?

 Are there parts **He wants** to rework in us?

It’s not easy making changes.

It’s no walk in the park.

Old habits are hard to change.

As Nelson often says,

the hardest thing to change is human behavior.

But that is precisely what God is calling us to do.

He wants to shape us according to **HIS** plan,

 not ours.

This is work, pure and simple.

So these are the **baby steps**

 I think we need to take to be molded by God.

See if you have different thoughts

or a different order:

* Acknowledge I could use some fixing.
* Look carefully at the parts I need to change.

Own it.

* Talk it over with God. See what he has to say.
* Agree to work with him in this molding process

and not against him.

* Let go of the need to have it my way.
* Lean into God.
* Allow him to change me.
* Go where he’s leading me. ***Step into*** the change.
* Acknowledge this is going to be a life-long process.

God surely is molding us to be deep-down beautiful,

not just ***skin-deep pretty.***

**Saul/ Paul**—gets hammered

Sometimes we get hammered down in the process.

That happened to Saul/Paul

when he was stuck seeing others

through judging eyes.

Christ molded Paul in a mighty, mighty way.

Saul, who becomes known as Paul,

turned his life around 180 degrees.

Sometimes we get STRETCHED

beyond our comfort zone.

We get pushed to spread our wings.

Remember the story of Moses?

 *I’m no orator. I stutter!*

No matter, replied God.

 I’ll get you help

in the form of your brother Aaron.

 But bottom line, Moses:

You WILL be my people’s leader.

Some of us grow up twisted and torn

by messages of worthlessness

thrown at us by the world.

*You’re ugly,*

 *You’re stupid,*

 *You’re fat,*

 *Nobody likes you.*

It’s hard to step free of this molding.

I think of that **woman at the well**,

she who had had five husbands,

shunned by her community, isolated, and bitter.

But Jesus saw her with loving, healing eyes,

and gave her the power of his message

like he had given no one else before.

She, the undeserving in the eyes of the world,

received the treasure beyond compare.

Like **Saul** before his conversion,

we get hammered down

when we insist on going our own way.

Like **Moses**, we get stretched by God

 to spread our wings,

to go beyond our comfort zone.

Like **the woman at the well**,

we get encouraged

because of his deep abiding love

showered on us.

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God the Master Potter pulls us out

of our safe little dark corner

and says **You, I love**.

You I will use.

 Let me mold you.

* **Hymn** *As the Deer*  **TFWS 2025**

**Community Prayer**

Abba Father, forgive us for the ways we think we can avoid Your loving work on our lives, to reshape us where we need changing.

 We always want to be those lovely pieces of pottery that bring You glory and honor when we serve You. We are just not sure about letting You do the work to turn us into the people You want us to be.

 Father, we place ourselves and our lives in Your hands, for Your use in whatever way pleases You, not ourselves and not others. AMEN

**Anthem** *Above All*

**Doxology**  **UMH 95**

* **Hymn** *Forever* **W&S 3023**

**Benediction**