

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 18:1-11

Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand.

—**God** (Jeremiah 18:6b)

Jingdezhen (pronounced GIN-day-jen) is a midsized city located in Jiangxi (pronounced gee-AHN-shee) province, China — about a four-hour train ride from Shanghai.

It's known as the porcelain capital of the world because it has been producing porcelain and pottery for more than 2,000 years. Jingdezhen put the "china" in China. Before Jesus was born, potters were making beautiful bowls and plates famous for being "as thin as paper, as white as jade, as bright as a mirror, and as sound as a bell."

The pottery traveled by way of the Silk Road and were already in Persia at the time of Christ. Who knows? Perhaps the magi from the east packed their frankincense and myrrh in ceramic bowls from Jingdezhen!

I mention this because the reading for today from Jeremiah 18 tells the story of Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house. There he witnessed a master potter at the wheel. The pot he was making, however, was flawed. So he crushed the clay into a lump and started over.

Three observations: First, God, the master Potter, works on us until satisfied. He kneads us as clay in his hands. He shapes us and he adds a beautiful glaze. He fires us in the kiln of experience and trials. The result is something beautiful for the glory of the Potter.

Second, I've seen pottery from all over the world. I am amazed at the enormous variety in shapes and sizes, the color and texture of glazes, the creativity of design and patterns and the variations in function. Some pots are decorative — beautiful to look at. Others are utilitarian: they are cooking or drinking vessels, or something like that.

So it is in the body of Christ. No two pots look the same or have the same purpose. We, as a work of the master Potter, are unique.

Third, In Jingdezhen, some ceramics were made exclusively for governments or emperors. They were commissioned and fired in a special kiln known as "Official Kiln," or "Royal Kiln."

That's you and me. We are God's special creations. We are stamped with the "official" or "royal" designation. We are set apart — not for a government or emperor — but for the King of Kings, and Lord of lords.

We can be grateful that our lives are in the hands of the master Potter.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Spirit of the Living God, melt me, mold me, fill me, use me — fall afresh on me! Amen.