

Christ Lutheran Church

“God with Us”

Advent Worship Series

December 2, 2018: Our Potter

Preacher: Pastor David Goehmann

As we come into Advent we are asking God to come. Jesus specifically is coming to us as he returns at the end of the world. And God has come to us in the person of Jesus. But who is are God? What is he like? What does he want from us?

Our one God, in the persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was there at the beginning of Creation. In the beginning, He was primarily a creator, like a potter. He took the dust and formed the first human being. So he is a potter. Well, now what ?

Once upon a time, there was a rather remarkable woman named Elouise. What made Elouise different was that she fairly glowed with the joy of her faith. While others talked about religion, Elouise lived her faith. While others complained about other people and the weather, Elouise anticipated tomorrow and looked toward a bright future. While others planned programs and fussed about the operation of the congregation, Elouise went about teaching and comforting and supporting others.

And the strangest thing happened. The more Elouise served, the more she seemed to glow. The more she did for others, the more a strange kind of light seemed to come from her. And it got brighter and brighter with each passing day.

Soon Elouise’s glow was so bright that it kind of hurt people’s eyes to

be around her. Her light was so different from what people were used to. But Elouise's light didn't shine on her at all. It shone from her and lit those around her. And it was so bright that it showed every blemish and fault, every age spot and scar, every imperfection they had. And, over time, Elouise became very unpopular indeed. At least to some, to some who loved the darkness of their own light.

“Oh, it doesn't matter,” said Elouise. “For every person who hides from the light, another finds the way. Perhaps some are tired of trying to make their own light or tired of trying to stand in the twilight of their own goodness. Perhaps they have found the darkness too deep and too frightening. Here they find the way—not mine—it is not my light—but God's.”

Of course, Elouise's story is a parable. We do not actually glow when we do the good that God would have us do. Let's face it, we could never manage our lives if we did glow with the good that we were able to do. It would not be long before we would begin to compare ourselves with each other. “I'm not as bright as I could be,” we would say to ourselves, “But at least I am brighter than that other guy there who calls himself a Christian.” And soon we would be in a brightness contest, trying to be the brightest and best so that others would admire us. But that's not the way the story goes. Elouise glowed despite her brokenness, despite her sin. Would it be surprising to hear she lost her parents at a young age. Would it be surprising to hear she was a pregnant teen. Of course it shouldn't be, because everyone has their hurt. Everyone has their brokenness. But she did not make the light. She could not. Neither can we.

Indeed, God has made us to live our faith. He has shaped us, like a potter shapes a piece of clay, to be the followers of Jesus we were meant to be. But no matter how you measure it, we are not treasures. We note what St. Paul said, “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV). “Jars of clay” or common clay pots—not very glamorous. Not very notable. Not even able to argue with the Potter about what kind of

pot we want to be. But pots we are. God's pots. Shaped by his hand. Made according to his will.

And God does not mean us to remain empty. Empty is our natural state. And we can work very hard to put something of meaning in ourselves. But for all our work and will, we end up with a pot full of nothing. Isaiah says: "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6 NIV). That's the best we can do. That empty space in the pot that we are, we cannot fill with anything of value.

And yet God has made us to be carriers of his gifts. Though we cannot fill ourselves with anything, God in Christ seeks to fill us with treasure. Unearthly treasure. Treasure we cannot create or sustain. Again as Paul says: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV). Indeed we are common clay pots. We have nothing of value of ourselves. But we have an unearthly treasure in us. A glowing, miraculous, wondrous, treasure—a treasure that we have the privilege of offering to all those around us, especially to those who are still empty, broken and lost in the darkness. The treasure is Jesus Christ. He is the gift that God offers.

God fills us with treasure. I went out in the Mountains of Montana. I did nothing to make those mountains come to be or be dressed with white snow and vegetation and animals of all shapes and sizes. That is how God fills us. He fills us with the majesty we have witnessed with our eyes and our hearts. That majesty is the Glory of Jesus who displayed his love in his death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead. We see that we are filled, filled with most specifically, the majesty of his forgiveness and love, right now.

Now God has filled us so deeply that we glow. We shine with his forgiveness and love. Amazingly, he dwells in us. Paul reminds us: "Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life" (Philippians 2:15b-16 NIV).

We are shaped by the hand of God, created by him and redeemed by Jesus Christ for the purpose of offering God's treasure—forgiveness and life. What an amazing gift!

We are God's saints, redeemed by Jesus Christ, shaped by the hand of God, filled with the Spirit so that the light of God's grace can shine through us and light all those who remain in darkness. We are God's stars lighting up the sky. Go! Shine! Amen.