

The treasure in the clay jar

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[0 : 00] Good morning. The reading today is 2 Corinthians chapter 4. Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways. We do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

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.

[1 : 27] Perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not abandoned. Struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

It is written, I believed, therefore I have spoken. Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak.

Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

[2 : 42] For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

Since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. So...

Let's see what is seen. Let's see. Let's see.

Let's go. Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. Good morning. And thank you very much, Norma, for that reading. It really spoke to me there as you were reading it.

[4 : 11] Let's get this mic here. Okay. Okay, so treasures in jars of clay. You know, one day I was in town and there was this fellow I kind of only barely knew really, but I knew he had an interest in spiritual things.

And he came up to me and he pointed his finger at me and he said, David, don't keep the faith.

And I kind of was taken back a bit. And then he said, share it around. And I thought, oh, yeah, that's good.

That makes sense. But then I said, well, actually, no, it don't make sense because if you don't keep the faith, you have nothing really to share. So I thought about that as he turned the window off with a smile on his face.

But I think he meant it in a different way. I think he meant to keep the faith and to share it, which is just the way he said it. Because the Apostle Paul, at the end of his old ministry, he said this, I have kept the faith.

[5 : 31] Now there is a crown laid up for me in eternity. And it's important for us to grasp something of the value of the faith in Christ has for us.

And it's a faith worth sharing. There are many muddy messages in the world today out there. The Apostle Paul says, we do not use deception as others do to distort the word of God.

But we set things forth plainly and clearly in verse 2. And he says in verse 5, we don't preach ourself, but we preach Jesus Christ as Lord.

And, you know, this must be our desire too, to preach Christ clearly and plainly, as in verse 2 tells us in our reading today.

In our Bible study the other night in Dieter's house, we just spoke something about the false teaching that's out there in our day. We see it sometimes on the TV evangelists and in some books.

[6 : 50] And there seems to be so much error, so much twisting of truth. Where is the plain truth? And it can be very discouraging for us. But the answer really is to concentrate on the ministry that we have been given, speaking the truth clearly and plainly.

People have a veil over their eyes. They are captive to the God of this world. The devil, Satan, has blinded the minds of them that believe not least the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, would shine on them.

And we sung something about God's light this morning. Struck me. God's light shining. And despite the clearness and the plainness we might use in our message, there is still in verse 3 something there that we need to be aware of.

And that is that the word if is there. If our gospel is hid. And there's a veil there. And let us be prepared for that.

That there is the if of blindness. There is a veil that the God of this world has put on unbelievers. So they cannot see the light of the gospel of Christ.

[8 : 14] You know that men prefer darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. And we are not always going to see big results, big things, even though we're speaking clearly.

And we're presenting the message plainly about the Lord Jesus. But we still may not see results. But verse 1 tells us, don't lose heart. Press on. But although there are discouragement, there is much encouragement.

Let us remember what the Lord has said. Let light shine out of darkness. In creation and in the new creation, that's what he says.

And the light shines. The knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ came into our hearts. And it will come in because he is the only one who can remove the veil.

[9 : 15] Not us. And he puts the treasure into the clay jar. And he does this for a reason.

In verse 7, it shows us that he puts the treasure into a clay jar. And it's a wonder.

I often work with clay jars, with cactus plants and putting them into clay jars. They're so easily broken. They're so easily get discolored. They let the water through.

There's different things about clay jars. But they're very delicate. But God has put a treasure into the clay jar. And it shows up his power that he's able to keep and use that clay jar in such a way that magnifies.

One thing about the clay jar is that it's what's in the clay jar is really what's important. And have we grasped something of the value that has been given to us when the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, has put that treasure into our heart and shone that light into us?

[10 : 36] Are we inclined to value the clay jar more than the treasure, which is a big mistake? And what is the value of the treasure?

Well, I think we could spend a lifetime considering the value and never reach the end of getting to the end of it.

Because it's a priceless, eternal value, the treasure that he's given us. So we cannot value it.

But what is the treasure? What is the treasure? I want to start off by asking this morning. What is the treasure in verse 7?

Well, here it is in verse 6. Therefore, we... Sorry. Go on, please. In verse 6 it says, For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has made light shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

[11 : 49] But we have this treasure. This is the treasure we have. That God, through the Holy Spirit, when we were absolutely dead and we had no hope, we were like Lazarus, we couldn't do anything for ourselves.

God came in, like Jesus has said, Lazarus, come forth. God came in and shone that light into our heart. That's the treasure that we have. And there is one thing I thought about is this. There is a principle with treasure. And the principle with treasure, when you have a great treasure, as we have here, not just a little coin or anything like that. This is a big treasure. When we have a big treasure, there is a principle to do with treasure. And it's this. The deeper you dig, the more you find. And I think this morning that it is worth digging into this passage. We could dig into the whole Bible. We'll be here a long time.

[12:53] But what about digging into this passage before us this morning? And the first thing I want to put my hand into the clay jar and to see what we have here.

And the first thing we have here when we come to verse one is this. He says, seeing that we have this ministry. Other versions might say we have received. We have received the ministry. God has given us the ministry. He has given you a ministry. He has given me a ministry. And he has given us as a church a ministry. And in verse one, he says, we, we together, the greatest ministry we have is together.

And togetherness is a great ministry. And that is vital. You have an individual ministry. And people who may think they have the smallest ministry in the church can have the greatest ministry. So I think that's important. And when we're all together, there is a ministry, just even, you know, singing in every aspect of what we do on a Sunday here.

[14:02] There's a powerful ministry at work here. And God has given us that. And you know, that man said, don't keep the faith. But the Bible says, keep the faith.

Because it's God who has given us that. I'm sure he got that wrong. He meant something else. But it's about that ministry has been given us from God.

And it's, that ministry is to be kept because it's been given to us. So that's the first thing we, we find when we dig into this passage of this treasure in the clay jar.

That's the first thing. The second thing is this, that we find is that it's worth sharing. that there is this treasure of sharing that's in there, in that treasure we've got.

Because it says about God's mercy that we have received. God has given this to us. He has, he has shone the light into our life.

[15:05] It may be through some preaching. It may be some, just reading the Bible yourself. But the Holy Spirit was involved in it. And when the church comes together, the Holy Spirit is present with us.

The promise is there. And through our ministry, through our sharing, what a wonderful way to share it is. And what a wonderful opportunity we have when people come in to the church to share with them.

We have opportunities ourselves to share in our life every day. But together as a church, going forward, God has given us this opportunity to share with people in a mighty way.

That again is in verse 1. It's about the mercy of God. The mercy of God has been given us. We share it with others. And then in verse 1 also, there's this enduring.

I call it, as we dig down, we find enduring in there. Enduring in opposition. That he's talking about, he's saying, you know, don't lose heart.

[16:12] Endure. Because there is going to be opposition. Where God is moving, there is always opposition from Satan. He's always in opposition. And the more we are moving, the more the opposition becomes.

And the more we tell people to the glory of God, the more we may well endure opposition. And in verse 13 in this morning's reading, he says there, I believe, that he quotes from the Psalms, and he quotes this, I believe, the Psalmist said, therefore I have spoken.

And he said, with the same spirit of faith, we also believe. That's in our heart. And we, we therefore speak. We speak what's in our heart.

And if we're to reach anyone, we're speaking what's in our heart. We're not speaking just to, to, sort of, we don't go to a plan to, to, to bring people in.

We go out and we tell them what's in our heart and we speak it to them. Therefore, we speak what's in our heart. And, and the result of this was, as we read on, it was to the thanksgiving of God that the praise, praise and thanksgiving as people were added to the message.

[17 : 34] But, when he quotes from the Psalms, if we were to read on what the Psalmist said, he says, I believe, therefore have I spoken. And then he goes on to talk about the opposition because opposition will always follow when you talk and tell people about the Lord.

So, enduring is important there. And, and he mentions it actually in two places. He, he mentions it in verse one and he mentions it in verse 16 that don't lose heart.

Says it twice, don't lose heart. And then, I think a very important thing is we dig again into that treasure, we find, in, in verse two, something else.

What do we find in verse two? Well, this is a life worth living. A life worth living with the, with the treasure in your clay jar. he says there, in verse two, let me read it, we have renounced secret and shameful ways.

We don't use deception. Our life has been changed by the fact that God has shone his light into us. We're not the same. We're not going to go out and live like we were before.

[18 : 54] We're not going out in the conversations we had before. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. God has done a work in us and is doing a work in us.

And it's a life worth living. It's new life. And that's part of the, that's part of the, the message of what we have to share with people.

It's new life in the spirit. It's not about do's and don'ts. And he brings that out, I think it's in chapter three, maybe verse six, I could be wrong, it is somewhere there.

He brings out about the life in the spirit is what they're proclaiming. It's not the letter because the letter kills but the spirit gives life. It's about life.

And it's a life worth living. But Satan will try his best to bring you back into the old ways. But this life is worth living. That's part of the treasure.

[19 : 51] Living your life for Christ. And then we go on again, this is probably like what we found before. But I want to mention here because I just felt that it came up.

It's, it's in verses three and four. And I think I brought it up before but it said if and it said veil. That's there.

And the point I'm making and the little treasure that I find there is it's worth persisting. It's worth persisting despite what you see. And this came very clearly to me quite recently.

That, you know, when we see the veil and we see the veil in so many people, it's quite easy to look at the veil and say this is impossible. This is impossible.

And you know, I recall many years ago going into a house and seeing the veil on the faces there and kind of thinking it's hopeless to say anything so I decided I wouldn't just, you know, have a cup of tea with him and chat with him and stuff like that.

[21 : 02] But I said, yeah, this isn't going to do any good to say anything here. But a couple of Sunday mornings ago a person walked in from that house and sat down on the seat.

They had given their life to the Lord. The light had shone in through where I could see it was pointless. God reached that person and changed their life.

They were up to me maybe the day after wanting to do a Bible study. You see, the thing is that we should be persistent because with God the impossible becomes possible.

And I think that is in verse, when we see the veil, when we see the ifs, with God can shine his light out into the darkness.

And he has said, let light shine. And God can do that. And I think another thing that as I dig down into that clay jar that I see is this.

[22 : 20] I see brokenness. I find brokenness in that. We're often broken. There are so many difficulties in your life.

They seem to come in left, right, and center. And they're cracking you up as such. Your clay is cracking up. Your clay jar, you don't know where it's all going to end.

But there's a reason for that, is that the power within you, the treasure within you, is all surpassing. And the fact that the brokenness of the clay jar just shows up more what's inside.

The more broken the clay jar is, sometimes the more treasure you will see that will show up. There is a story in the Old Testament, and it's in, I think it's in Judges chapter 7.

And it is Gideon and his army. And he didn't have a very big army. But Gideon equipped his army with trumpets and with empty clay pitchers.

[23 : 33] And there was a lamp inside them clay pitchers. And when the signal came, his men were to do this. They were to blow the trumpet and to break the clay pitcher.

And when the pitcher was broken, the lamp inside shone out in brilliant light. And it terrified the enemy.

And for us, it's often the fact that when we're broken and we yield ourselves to God, the gospel shines out in our life to other people.

We find the treasure in the brokenness when we dig deep. pressure. Then we have again, digging down, we find pressure.

Again, it's associated with that. There's pressure on all sides. I think that's in verse 8. I have a small text Bible, so it's going hard to see.

[24 : 42] 7, 8. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. We're persecuted, but we're not abandoned.

We're struck down, but we're not destroyed. whatever the pressure is on us, you know, even if we're think we're too old to do anything, we're not, because it says in the passage there about we're being renewed by day, day by day, that although we're wasting away, although we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

God is working at us. If we're 110, he's still working, and he has us here for a reason. I met a man, 90-something years of age one day, and what he said to me always stuck with me.

He said, I'm still around, because God has some plan for me, and he had. So, that's great to hear. We keep going on, despite the pressure that we find, because in the pressure we will find the treasure.

And in verse 13 we've already covered that, that it's worth speaking out about it, because it's reaching people for the glory of God. and he says about speaking out, he said, and all this is for your benefit, so that the grace is reaching more and more people, and causing thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

[26 : 38] So, it's worth speaking out, but speaking from your heart. Last time I was here, I spoke about Jesus and the woman of the well. He didn't come in to fire straight at her, he first of all spoke to her, and he said, give me a drink.

We need to speak from our heart, not to bombard people, but to come alongside people, and show them what's in our heart, and show the light of the gospel, through the brokenness that's in us.

Finally, there's probably a lot more, but as we finally take that, well I think it's almost finally, there is in there, there's verse 18, there is spiritual vision, that we should have that vision, a treasure has vision, that there is, without a vision the people perish, that there is having that vision, as we delve deep into the treasure, we find that spiritual vision in verse 18.

we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, that will give us the vision, the spiritual vision for what's ahead, and this is finally, we find there, what's in here, is eternal, it's going to last forever, without end, that's why we cannot value this in any way, it's so wonderful, I am lost for words to say it, but I thank God that he has given us his light, that's shone in our hearts, amen.

Heavenly Father, we just give you praise and thanks today that through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have this new life given to us in the Holy Spirit, we have a life worth living because the Holy Spirit is living in us and through us, and no matter what brokenness and pressure we face in life, we know that you are with us and we can dig deep into that and it's often in times, Lord, where we have been hard pressed, where we've been pushed to the limit and beyond limits that we find your nearness and closeness and that wonderful presence that we find in our life and in our prayer is so real and mighty.

[29 : 26] we thank you, Lord, for the treasure that you have given us and you continue to show us more and more as we delve deep.

Lord, may we as a church delve more and more into the treasure because we only touch the surface and help us all together to have that ministry, to know that you've given us that ministry of togetherness, Lord, and you have a plan for this place and this church, and this people together. It's not about the building, but it's about the people and it's about all of us together, Lord, in the ministry you've given us and individually, Lord. Help us to live up and to trust you and to look to you. Lord, we don't preach ourselves, but we preach Jesus Christ and to him be the glory. In Jesus' name, amen.