

The Inside Operation

17 - God's Covert Agents
Church on the Park I Sunday, 11 SEPT 2016

Text: Judges 7:16-22

Theme: The Father has an inside operation going on within you to bring Jesus light to the world.

Intro: Gideon's story shows us that God uses weapons that are not of this world. Specifically, through Gideon we see three of the Lord's secret weapons: 1) Trumpets, 2) Empty Vessels, 3) Torches. The Lord is making you into these weapons. We saw in one of the last messages that the Lord is making you into his trumpet to declare his victory and Lordship. The trumpet teaches us that the battle is the Lord's (2 Chron. 32:7). Today, we will focus on the weapon of the empty vessels. Jesus wants to make you into his vessel of honour.

1) Your heavenly Father is the potter and you are his clay (Isa. 64:8).

- Here's what the **Lord spoke** to me this week: "Study the empty vessels. Teach my people to pour out their hearts to me. Teach them that I fill empty vessels of hunger and thirst to me. Remember the bowls in Revelation, they were filled with incense. I want your lives to be vessels of prayer and action. Let your souls be filled with fresh oil. My weapons are unusual and strange, but they work. They are my secret weapons. They are not guns and knives, but my truth will break down strongholds."
- "But now, O Lord, You are our **Father**, we are the **clay**, and You our **potter**; and all of us are the work of Your hand" (Isa. 64:8)
- Your temptation is to **reverse** this: to make yourself the potter and the Lord your clay. Listen to Isaiah 29:16: "**You turn things around!** Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made would say to its maker, 'He did not make me'; or what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?"
 - Since the beginning, mankind has been **fashioning God** into his **own image**.
 - Plus, we **tend** to want to **make ourselves** or reinvent ourselves, rather than the Lord do the work.
 - Let the Lord **operate** on the **inside** of you.
 - The **Gospel** is all about **God** doing the **work** and you and I being **soft** enough to let him.
 - There's a point where I **let go** and **let God make** our church.
 - I didn't want **our church** to look like any others, but just as the Father wanted it to look.
 - In the story of Gideon we have seen that God is our **maker** and **former**.
 - We've talked about the **process** of **making wine, olive oil, swords** and **bread**.
 - He's the **winemaker**, the **olive oil maker**, the **blacksmith** and the **baker**.
 - Now, I want to talk about how **pottery** make **pottery**.
 - God told **Jeremiah**, "**Arise and go down** to the **potter's house** and there I will announce My words to you. Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel..." (Jer. 18:1ff)
 - Here's the process **simplified**:
 - The potter first starts with the **right clay**. The clay has to be **soft** and **moist**, otherwise the work is impossible.
 - This is the same for you. You need to be **pliable** in God's hands. **Moistened** through **God's Word** and **Spirit**. **Soft** through **surrender** (#surrender - the woman's conference).
 - Surrender to God makes you like mouldable clay to God.
 - *Is your heart getting hard? Dry?*
 - Second, the potter **wedges** the clay before it goes to to wheel.
 - It's **like** the **process** of **kneading**. Here the potter '**wakes**' up the clay taking out the **air bubbles** and making it **homogenous**.
 - It also involves **slamming** and **smacking** the clay on the **table**.

- Third, the potter **throws** the clay on the potter's **wheel** and **shapes** it.
- On the wheel the clay **continually spins** allowing the potter to press and form it.
- This part takes a lot of skill. Thankfully, our Potter is in charge.
 - There will be **much turning** as God is making you, much **repenting**.
 - *Are you feeling dizzy? Pressed?*
 - Consider this, if you are surrender to the Potter, he's making you into a beautiful vessel.
- Lastly, after the pot dries its **fired** in the **kiln** to make **hard** and **permanent**.
 - *Do you feel like you are in the fire?* Remember, God is making you and he will continue bring you through these different stages.

2) The vessel is important, but more important is what is in the vessel (2 Cor. 4:7-18)

- Notice how Judges talks about **empty vessels**.
 - You become **empty** as you **pour out** your **heart** in **prayer**.
 - You also become **empty** as you **lose yourself** for Jesus.
 - You become **empty** as you **hunger** and **thirst** for righteousness in prayer.
- “But we have this **treasure** in **earthen vessels**, so that the **surpassing greatness** of the power will be of **God** and not from **ourselves**; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed...” (2 Cor. 4:7)
 - In Gideon's empty vessels were **fire**. That's what's meant to be in you in I—the **fire of the Spirit**.
 - The **paradox** of this life.
 - We are **weak** and **ordinary** people—**vulnerable** and **easily broken**—and yet, we carry **extraordinary treasure** and **power** with us.
 - It is the **operation** of the **Spirit** on the **inside** that continually gives you **resurrection life** in this world of **disappointment, disorder** and **death**.
 - In this paradox, do not lose **hope** (2 Cor. 4:16-18)
- **Jesus** became the **vessel** the **Father** formed.
 - All **throughout** his **life** he allowed the **Father** to **form** him.
 - His flesh was **not superhuman**. He had his treasure in an earthen vessel.
 - Finally, he allowed **God** to **crush** (**smash**) him on the **cross**, much like **Gideon** **smashed** the **empty vessels**.
 - However, when **Jesus' body** was **broken**, it only allowed the **treasure within** him to **shine forth**.
 - Three days later, **Jesus** **rose** from the **dead** and **sent** the **fire** of the **Spirit**
 - The **cross** **allowed** the **fire** and **light** to **shine**.
- **Gideon's story** is **prophetic** of the **end**.
 - In the end, your **earthly vessel** will be **broken** and **die**, but then you will **fully come** into **Jesus' light**.
 - Moreover, you will receive a **new, immortal vessel**—an **eternal**, heavenly **dwelling**.
- In the **final victory** that Jesus brings, our **mortal vessels**, our bodies, will be **smashed** and we will receive our **immortal resurrected** bodies. That's good news! (2 Cor. 5:1-10)

3) Hunger and thirst for God fills your empty vessel (2 Kings 4:1-7)

- Tell the story
- “*What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?*”
 - Think about **what you have** in your life.
 - If you have nothing, what you do have if you are saved is a **‘jar of oil.’**
 - In other words, **the Holy Spirit is inside you**.
 - So **things are not hopeless**.
 - With the **Holy Spirit** comes **multiplication** and everything you need.
- She's told to get **lots** of **empty vessels**.
 - To me this speaks of **hunger and thirst**.
 - Empty vessels speak of hunger and thirst, like an empty stomach. An empty bank account speaks of poverty. “Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the **Kingdom** of

heaven” (Matt. 5:3). “Blessed are those who **hunger** and **thirst** for righteousness for they will be **filled**” (Matt. 5:6).

- *How hungry and thirsty are you for God? Or have you filled your life with other things? Even good things?*
- This also speaks to me about **drawing & gathering** in **hungry** and **thirsty souls**.
- The more you **gather**, the more **the Holy Spirit is poured out**.
- *What happens?*
- The **small jar** of oil is **multiplied** and fills every empty vessel she brings to it.
 - My testimony with starting the Bible School.
 - My testimony with the morning thoughts.
- As long as there are **empty vessels**, the **Holy Spirit will not stop moving**.
- Once **your filled**, **get some others** to fill them.
 - This is how **God multiplies** his **Kingdom**.

Conclusion: You are God’s vessel. He’s the potter and you are his clay. Live surrendered so that he can mould you. Remember, it’s what’s on the inside that counts—the person and power of the Holy Spirit. As you hunger for him you are filled and as you gather hungry souls the Holy Spirit will move through you to fill them.

END NOTES

Empty (*reqim*) - *riq* is used a few times literally of emptying vessels, sacks, etc. More often it is used in the extended meaning of drawing a sword (emptying the scabbard?). In Psalm 35:3 it refers to drawing the spear; in Gen. 14:13 to leading out troops. (TWOT)

Also, this word is used to mean empty as in vain or worthless. Like, "he's an empty person," or "their words are empty."

So the Bible is seeming to say that these empty vessels were quite useless, but God used them.

But, here's the thing: these worthless vessels were powerful because they had fire in them.

Vessel (*kad*) - jar (1 Kings 17:12; Eccl.e 12:6) - a vessel for both drawing and carrying water (Gen. 24:14); for keeping meal (Ecc. 12:6); 1 Kings 17:12, 14, 16 - this vessel was one which women were accustomed to carry on their shoulders.

How is a empty vessel a weapon?

It really has to do with what the vessel contains.

Remember, how Jesus used the vessels in turning the water to wine (John 2). First he had them bring the vessels, then he had them fill the vessels.

You are God's vessel.

What are you filled with?

Vessels of mercy (Rom. 9:23)

2 Cor. 4:7-18

layers of meaning

Here's the paradox: your brokenness (the smashing of the jars) causes the light of Jesus to shine through you.

1 Thes. 4:4: "That each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God, like the Gentiles who do not know God..."

2 Tim. 2:19-26

"Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands...Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware...if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor..."

Heb. 9:4 - The golden jar full of manna

Heb. 9:21 - "Sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood"

1 Kings 17:8-16 - Elijah and the widow from Zarephath

2 Kings 4:1-7 - Empty Vessels

She asked for help, borrowing empty vessels.

Keli - vessel, weapon, equipment, instrument, tools, etc. “The basic idea of this root is ‘to bring a process to completion.’ (TWOT)

The Potter’s House in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 18)

He is the Potter and we are the clay.

The process of making pottery. We’ve talked about the process of making wine, olive oil, swords and bread. Now, I want to talk about how potters make pottery.

Revelation & the bowls of prayer

Rev. 5:8