

MODERATOR'S SERMON based on the FELLOWSHIP OF MEN CONFERENCE THEME 2023: "We are crafted into the potter's perfect plan for a mission" based on Jeremiah 18:1-10

Various greetings...

Congratulations FOM, on your theme choice. I was praying for a message for this theme and so I pray that God will speak to us in a special way for such a special occasion for which you have left your homes, your busy schedules and your important roles. The text that you have chosen exposes us to the beautiful and timeless image of a potter on the wheel, and God saying to Jeremiah: "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel" (v.6). Three things the Lord may be saying to us from this loaded text:

- Every vessel has a purpose.
- But vessels have flaws.
- God wants to re-mould flawed vessels for God's use.

1. EVERY VESSEL HAS A PURPOSE/MISSION

If you understand your God-given purpose, your mission, you will be effective wherever you are.

Clay pots are made for different purposes. Some clay pots are made to withstand intense heat. Others are made to withstand heat for long periods, such as the pots that cook trotters or a poitjie for five hours. Understand that God made you for a purpose that may require you to withstand times of intense heat, sustained trouble or suffering. Then you can hang in there knowing that it is your season of being "troubled but not destroyed" (2 Cor 4:8-10), knowing that because of the heat you will produce lasting virtues, characteristics and results which can never be produced in times of joy alone.

Some vessels are made to store water, so they must be watertight and not have any cracks or holes in them in order to fulfil their purpose. When you are required to be righteous and be a good example to those around you, you are that vessel – a vessel of righteousness. The world is hungry for people who stand up for what is right, people who are models for the younger generation, people who know that righteousness comes at the cost of popularity, but will choose righteousness anyway.

Other vessels have to carry heavy contents and so they need thick walls. If you are a leader of anything you need to ask God to give you such a thick skin in order to fulfil your calling as a leader. Any type of leadership role needs a thick skin – from leadership in the home, to church leadership, to political leadership. If you are running a business today in our kind of economies and markets, you will give up and run away from your business if you don't develop the kind of thick skin that gives you the courage to diversify or find solutions for the weak areas of your business.

Other vessels are made to carry pot plants. They must have holes drilled into the bottom so that they nourish the plant and drain off excess water. If you are not able to drain off negativity from your mind you will drown your God-given mission and it will die. You have to be able to hear what is said, then keep the good and the useful, while draining off the discouraging and the demotivating words – especially if you want to continue to serve God in anything.

I believe the most enviable vessels are the ones that are made for décor. Their job is to just sit and be admired. What an easy job – it's certainly better that being made for intense heat. But the reality is that even the décor vessels suffer from dust and suffocation, in the same way décor people