

Treasure in clay jars

Notes on the Bible readings

- Paul's epistles or letters are the earliest Christian writings we have and date from before the Gospels were written (AD 49-65). Before his dramatic encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9.3-19), Paul, then known as Saul, was a fanatical persecutor of Christians. After this experience, he became an ardent apostle of Jesus and the first Christian missionary. He travelled extensively across the Roman Empire, founding Christian communities and corresponding with them after he'd moved on, to encourage them in their faith and teach them how to live out the good news. It's clear that people also wrote to Paul, but we only have his side of the correspondence, so we must deduce the prevailing issues from his letters.

- The important point about clay jars (v.7) is not their fragility as containers, but their variety and everyday nature. They are ordinary jars but their contents are valuable. The Romans used big clay pots to store food essentials such as flour, oil and grain, and smaller ones for precious perfume and ointment. Paul uses the analogy of pots and people to show that we are mere mortals, but we carry within ourselves the knowledge of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. God has put this treasure into our hearts and minds, so the power to shine with Christ's light comes from God, not us.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ What have you seen recently that was extraordinary?
- ▶ How can people reveal something of God to us?
- ▶ What might we be hiding?



A prayer of thanksgiving

*Thank you, God, for the gifts you have given us.
Thank you for your creation.
Thank you for the steadfastness of your love.
Thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus.
Thank you for the outpouring of your Holy Spirit.
Thank you for the stories we have of you through the ages,
written on stone, papyrus, clay, vellum or paper.
Thank you that stories of you were told from one generation to another,
passed on by word of mouth.
Thank you that the stories are old and trusted and yet ever new.
Thank you for all these gifts given through the years
that now are treasures to us. Amen.*

A prayer for others

*We pray, Lord God, for the people who have helped us along life's road:
those who have nurtured us and cared for us;
those who have taught us and trained us;
those who have embraced and emboldened us.
For them all:
Lord God, I pray.

I pray for those who cannot see the treasures they have;
treasures that come from those around them, or from you.
For them all:
Lord God, I pray. Amen.*

A personal prayer

Lord, I am grateful that you understand and know where I have come from, and what treasures and burdens I carry. I am grateful that you carry them with me. Amen.

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Live your faith

Look for the hidden Christ in those you meet this week. Look for an opportunity to show the hidden Christ in you.