

2016 Summer Worship – Last Summer Sunday (Outdoors)
Communion [Intinction] – PRAISE BAND
“Maker/Re-Maker”

Texts: Jeremiah 18:1-11
Philemon 1, 10-12, 17-18, 25

Preached: 9/4/16

On this Labor Day weekend, I hope you will have a chance to picnic, relax, grill out, spend recreational time with family and friends...maybe even have a party. But if you are like me, the three-day weekend isn't just for partying...it's also a great chance to get some jobs done around the house – some cleaning out and redding up. When we do that, usually there is a good deal of throwing stuff away, out with the old to make room for the new.

We think nothing of tossing old appliances, old toys and all kinds of old containers into the garbage, but people in poor countries, like Haiti, have learned that old things, discarded things, things that are broken and don't work anymore, can be re-purposed, turned into something useful. They turn trash into treasures. As we rest from our labors this holiday weekend, we are reminded that our God also turns trash into treasure. Our God, is not just Maker, but also ReMaker.

We understand the concept...Recycling. We do it with office paper, glass, plastic and aluminum cans...sometimes, when it's convenient. But I've been at too many parties where there was no recycling bin provided, so that aluminum cans, glass and everything else was thrown into the trash. This happens even here at church. Sometimes, after a church party, or when the EUCC was rented, I'll find dozens of cans and bottles thrown in the garbage. Inevitably, I pick through the garbage and make sure those things get into one of our recycling bins. The cans, of course, don't just get recycled, they go in the Haiti bin, back by the Abitibi Paper Dumpster.

For years, the Noble family has been dealing with that sticky old bin, quietly and faithfully taking those cans to the recycling facility and bringing back hard earned cash, which they donate to our Haiti fund. You can see in our announcements that the cans we might have thrown away, not only get recycled, but have earned us over \$700 in clean water supplies for our Haitian partners in Limbe and Bas Limbe! Lives in those two towns are being remade, because families are healthier

drinking the clean water supplied by the systems we installed. Recycling PLUS Generosity = Transformation...It's a beautiful thing – and the way God intended our world to operate.

But we have little need, nor the desire to recycle most junk. It is easier to throw it in the trash.

If we had grown up in Haiti, however, our story would likely be different. After four trips to Haiti, I am still humbled and amazed at the creativity and resourcefulness of the Haitian people. Abject poverty has forced Haitians to engage in some truly inventive recycling. Since they have virtually nothing new to work with, they find creative ways to use whatever they can scrounge, almost creating something out of nothing. It's amazing what they can make out of a discarded piece of twisted old sheet metal.

Our first visit to Haiti we toured a school. One of the creative students, who was part of the school's welcoming party, saw my t-shirt sporting a Solar Under the Sun logo – Solar Under the Sun is the Presbyterian organization that trained our Haiti Team in solar power. Without telling us or asking us, this student put himself to work all week, creating an exact copy of the logo in metal work. As we were leaving Haiti that first time, the student's school director met us at the airport and presented to us this amazing rendition of the Solar Under the Sun logo.

Now that's what you call real recycling. It's this kind of new appreciation the prophet Jeremiah gained when God sent him to the potter's house. The people of Israel were on a perilous path, a path of perversity and injustice and idolatry. Jeremiah could see that they were headed for judgment and exile. Observing the potter, and listening to God's Word, Jeremiah began to see that divine creativity might allow for a very different outcome.

He saw that the potter did not give up when the first vessel was spoiled, but he reworked it into something new. Jeremiah delivered God's Word to his people: "Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? ... Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel." God is the potter. His people are clay. God is the maker and he can design as he pleases.

But God, as potter, invites the clay to participate. Regular clay just sits there, like a lump on the wheel. But God's people have a choice... to respond, to participate with their Maker – to trust and welcome God's remaking in their life...regardless of their past.

At the potter's house, we come to the table, the potter's wheel, when we understand that the cost of living a life of sin and arrogance, misery and despair is too high, and that only a reworking, refashioning at the hands of the Master Potter will work to turn our lives around.

Fortunately, God is ready and eager to take:

- what is broken and fix it,
- what is wounded and heal it,
- what is defiled and cleanse it,
- what is bitter and sweeten it,
- what is impure and purify it,
- what is incomplete and make it whole.
- what is ugly and turn it into something that is beautiful.

When we come together in worship, we proclaim that God is not only Maker, but ReMaker. God's power, right now, is working transformation, for you, for us, for our church, for our denomination, for our community and for the world. And so, we sing, we celebrate, we give thanks, we get refreshed at God's Table of Blessing.

Through the course of ministry, I have come across people with broken lives...people who shoulder a heavy burden because of their sins, their mistakes,

their transgressions...people who have found themselves in a world of hurt, with no chance to redeem themselves.

One man I can remember, at a different church than this one and who has now passed away, came to me one morning to confess something. I knew him well, I thought, had worked with him for years, and trusted him. He explained the terrible trouble he had gotten himself into, the lies he had told to cover it up, the illegal activity he had perpetrated and the problems he had caused for himself, for me, for the church, for his workplace and for the community. I listened. He cried. I listened more. He sobbed. I didn't speak, because I didn't know what to say. He cried harder. After a long silence, I said a few things...basically restating part of his story for clarification. Then I prayed for him and with him. I prayed to God, his maker, and I asked God to help him remake his life. This man couldn't do it on his own. He didn't know how. He could not go on without God's help and God's creative remaking. We prayed fervently to God, many times, for resolution in his life...for another chance...for life remade...For God is not just our Maker, but also our Re-Maker.

When life is broken...we are invited to turn to God...who has dedicated himself to Golden Repair. We have considered Haitians and their propensity to recycle. Let us now take up the Japanese propensity for golden repair:

"Special Japanese potters often do this when a precious piece of pottery has been broken. After mixing lacquer resin with powdered gold, they use the resin to put the broken pieces together. What they end up with is a pot with cracks in it, but the cracks are filled with gold. They call it kintsukuroi (keen-tsoo-koo-roy). Golden repair. Such restoration creates a unique piece of art and makes a philosophical statement as well. Kintsukuroi asserts that breakage and repair is part of the unique history of an object, rather than something to deny or disguise. What if we welcomed more golden repair in our lives, rather than so-often hiding our past brokenness? What if, instead of disguising our cracks and deficiencies, we took on the discipline of golden repair." We would witness to our creative God, who made the world and everything in it, but who stays engaged, always ready to re-make what is broken, even when it seems beyond repair.

Thanks be to God, who is not only Maker, but ReMaker. Amen.