
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

June 28, 2015

Treasure in Clay Pots

“But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn’t come from us.”

2 Corinthians 4:7 (Common English Bible)

My favorite photographer today is Alan S. Maltz. His work is primarily nature, destination and landscape photography with particular attention on South Florida. His work has garnered wide acclaim including *The Official Wildlife Photographer of Florida* by The Wildlife Foundation of Florida and *The Official Fine Art Photographer of Florida* by Visit Florida. His work is not inexpensive so, consequently, I have only one of his pieces, Tropical Blues, a lovely sunset in the Florida Keys.

I purchased this piece already matted but unframed. This is how I have displayed it in my office for nearly two years – waiting until I am comfortable in spending an extravagant sum to have it properly framed. Though there will be some who may disagree with me, I believe that it is not fitting to enclose such a lovely – and expensive – picture in an inexpensive frame. Priceless artifacts are encased in lovely and prominent cabinets in museums and expensive jewelry is placed in presentation boxes that are nearly as beautiful as the jewelry itself. Anything less would fail to properly value the artifact or beautiful jewelry. The same is true for this rich and beautiful photograph. Yet this, writes Paul, is precisely what God has done.

In a startling contrast, God has taken the magnificent treasure of divine grace and placed it in human hearts – hearts that are likened to clay pots. This is a God who would take a fine art photograph of Alan S. Maltz and place it quickly into a tawdry picture frame found in a yard sale. Here is an immense and glorious treasure entrusted to such broken and pathetic instruments as men and women; jewels of a great Kingdom placed in a flimsy box of cardboard. *“But we have this treasure in clay pots.”* This is what God has done – and so, there must be a lesson here for all of us.

Paul invites the reader to join him in discovery, to find the reason and purpose for this most unusual contrast of treasure and clay. And Paul’s rich discovery is our discovery: *“so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn’t come from us.”* God’s purpose is that it will be unmistakable to the world that the forward movement of the church’s mission cannot be credited to us, the church. The power of the church to change lives and transform communities does not come from human strength and determination. Anyone who has an honest estimation of human ability understands that. They understand that, alone, any of us are inadequate for the job. There must be something more, something else at work in us to accomplish the immense task of making whole in the world what is broken. That something more, that something else is God.

Prayer: Gracious God, I ask that I may be used by you today in such manner that others will see the presence of the risen and living Christ within me. Amen.

Doug Hood