

Romans 1:19-25

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.”

We all have memories of childhood. Some good ... Some bad. We can remember friends we played with, games we played, places we may have gone, and we may even remember things we saw. As I prepared for this weeks sermon I was thinking about my childhood and again toys I played with. My favorite toy I played with was GI Joe®, I played with Erector® Sets, Lincoln Logs®, and many other such toys. I remember times I was home sick and watching Romper Room®, I also remember watching other children's TV shows like The Adventures of Mr. Magoo, David and Goliath, which were puppets, and who could forget Gumby®?

Gumby® was made in a style called Claymation. I found out, clay figures were created and then placed in a scene one picture taken then moved ¼ of an inch, and then another picture taken and then moved another ¼ of an inch, and the process continued. What made this process work so well was that the characters or figures were moldable. They were molded and remolded over and over until the perfect figure was created.

Many of us played with a toy much like this which is still around today. It is found in almost every home with children. It is used in all primary schools as a teaching tool. This toy was originally created to clean wall

paper? What is this toy I'm talking about? That's right Play-Doh®. Once the toxic chemicals were removed it became a sensation among children and teachers alike. The one thing Play-Doh® depends on is its moldability. If it loses its moldability, it becomes hard and it becomes worthless. What important qualities could we learn from Play-Doh®?

Last week ago I spoke about being connected and used Legos® as an illustration. Legos® show how we need to be connected with God and with each other and that we need to connect with those who may not know of God and His saving grace. When we are connected properly with God and each other we can stand against anything the world can throw at us. But in order to connect some of us may have to change our line of thinking, and in order to change we need to be flexible or as the hymn puts it "moldable."

In order for Play-Doh® to work properly it must be fresh. If Play-Doh® is not fresh it will not work properly. Freshness does not happen by accident. The same goes for us we too need to always be fresh. Our minds need to be fresh and impressionable. This is only possible if we remain in the proper environment. Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald's, knew the importance of this principal. He taught his employees, "As long as you're

green, you're growing. As soon as you become ripe, you begin to rot."

Romans 12:2 tells us "*Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*" Be transformed, be renewed, be fresh, be teachable, be moldable this is how we are to be.

Are you teachable? Are you moldable? Prolonged exposure to an unhealthy environment will and does cause irreparable damage to Play-Doh®. Being callousness and hurtful will eventually harden not only your exterior but also your interior. We need to re-evaluate our personal environments, and our surroundings. Where do we spend most of our time and with whom do we spend it and what are we doing when we are there? Do we continually focus on the world and our own pleasures? Do we make everything about us first and foremost? If so, we will become hard and unmoldable towards God and His people. That's a fact!

What would happen if God promised to heal you or a loved one of a serious disease this Tuesday evening, and He forgot? What would you think about Him? Would you believe Him if He came back to you and said "I'm sorry I forgot. I will heal you next Tuesday evening?" How many times

would it take God not doing what He said before you became hard and untrusting towards Him? What is the difference between what I just explained and us not showing up meetings and/or services when we said we would because of worldly pursuits?

Do you say you will do one thing and then not do it, only to say later “I forgot.” Matthew 7:19-20 *“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.”* What kind of fruit do you produce? Something to think about.

We become so preoccupied with our own little world that we forget about God. I know some are saying “I think about God all the time,” but what do you think about when you think about God? I need this, I need that, heal me, heal my children, or give me this. How often are our thoughts about serving God?

How often is our priority for the Children’s or Youth ministries? How often are our thoughts about those shut-in or sick and unable to attend? I know, I know “I use to do this, and I use to do that.” If this is what you are saying, you’re telling everyone around you have become hard and unmoldable and you are no longer fresh.

The unique thing about Play-Doh® is it can be molded and then remolded over and over again. Our shaping process should be just like that it should never end. If we do become hard and unmoldable or un-teachable Scripture is clear; Matthew 5:13 *“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.”* Once Play-Doh® gets hard the only thing it is good for is to be thrown out.

Another quality of Play-Doh® is that when you mix colors together they cannot be unmixed. The lesson we learn from this is: some traits are nearly impossible to unlearn. Losing bad habits are harder than gaining good ones. Each of us needs to do an inventory of our own personal traits. We need to identify those traits which do not mix well with Godly traits. Let me mention again, I believe we are too free with the word Christian. Just because someone is nice and/or a good person does not make them a Christian! Again, *“you will know them by their fruits.”*

If God is secondary in your life this means you have mixed Him with the world. God can never be secondary. Matthew 6:33 tells us *“seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,”* seek Him first not as an after thought.

1 Corinthians 10:24 “*Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.*” We are to put the needs of others first, and this does not mean just the needs of our children and/or grandchildren; because this too is seeking your own good.

As fresh and moldable people we should be constantly looking for ways to serve the world and worship God. When we reach the point where all we want to do is sit in a building and listen and watch others worship then we have reached the point of being “*no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men,*” as Jesus told us earlier.

Are you moldable, teachable, are you usable? Or have you become mixed with the world and then harden to the world around? Do you seek God first or only when it suits you? Can God use you to work in His kingdom or have you become unmoldable, fixed in one position, and as Scripture says “*no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men?*” If so its time to allow God in to soften you up to a place where you can be moldable by Him and for Him.

Remember from our passage in Romans 1 verses 20-22 “*So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened.*” If we know God but still do not honor Him with our thoughts and deeds then we are “*futile in our thinking.*” Are we here to truly worship God or just make an impression on someone? Have we become hard to opening ourselves up to God and His leading?

In a cathedral in Copenhagen, Denmark there is a magnificent statue of Jesus by the noted sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. When Thorvaldsen first completed the sculpture he gazed upon the finished product with great satisfaction. It was a sculpture of Christ with face looking upward and arms extended upward. It was a statue of a majestic, conquering Christ. Later that night, however, after the sculptor had left his fine new work in clay to dry and harden something unexpected occurred. Sea mist seeped into the studio in the night.

The clay did not harden as quickly as anticipated. The upraised arms and head of the sculpture began to drop. The majestic Christ with arms lifted up and head thrown back was transformed into a Christ with head bent

forward and arms stretched downward as if in a pose of gentle invitation. At first Thorvaldsen was bitterly disappointed. As he studied the transformed sculpture, however, he came to see a dimension of Christ that had not been real to him before. It was the Christ who is a gentle, merciful Savior.

Thorvaldsen inscribed on the base of the completed statue, “Come Unto Me,” and that picture of the Lamb of God in His mercy has inspired millions.

Have you become hard and unmoldable? Can God mold us the way He molded Jesus? Are we really useable for God to serve the world or have we become hard and cracked? This morning God is saying to all of us here “*Come unto Me.*” Come asking God to as we sang earlier “mold me, make me, use me, fill me.” Come to God and place yourself in His hands, the hands of the potter. Am I moldable, are you moldable this morning? Am I moldable, ask yourself “Do I remind you of a hardened statue or Gumby?”