

We Have This Treasure

"But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." II Corinthians 4:7

"**WE** have this treasure in clay jars...."

"We **HAVE** this treasure in clay jars...."

"We have **THIS TREASURE** in clay jars...."

"We have this treasure **IN CLAY JARS**...."

We all have treasures. Go in to any home and you will find the family's treasures. They will be hanging on the wall or stashed in china cabinets or placed attractively for all to see, somewhere on coffee tables, mantelpieces and so on. Or maybe the treasure is sitting in the driveway or parked in the garage or down at the marina. It could be that the treasure is the house itself.

A story is told about a family in the Far East who found a pearl, a beautiful priceless pearl of fantastic size and unparalleled beauty, a treasure. They made a small box to hold it and hid it away. As each new generation came along they were taken to the hiding spot, the box was brought out to be looked at and the story told about the treasure within. After a long time, as people died and the treasure was passed on in its little box, many details of the story were forgotten and the story gradually changed. The box itself came to symbolize the treasure within. The box was decorated and became more and more elaborate. The treasure was completely forgotten. Then along came a generation who did not care about family traditions and who questioned everything. They decided to open it. What did they find? The pearl or a pile of dust? You decide.*

Is the treasure that the box was created to contain still there, or has it turned to dust? This is a question which confronts us as individual Christians and as members of the church, the Body of Christ. Century after century the church

has handed down this treasure to us. In a box. The box itself has become more and more ornate and unwieldy. Does it still contain the treasure that was entrusted to her? Do you contain this treasure?

On the night Jesus was betrayed he talked with his disciples and shared some of his last thoughts with them. He gave them what he called a new commandment. "Love one another, as I have loved you." Is this not the treasure we carry as the church, as individual members of it? A love so profound that it radically changes us and changes the world we live in? This treasure that we carry around in clay jars, in our fragile and imperfect humanity; this treasure is nothing less than the love of God for us and for his creation. Imagine what would happen if we didn't keep it locked up and hidden away, stashed in ornate buildings or in hearts held tight in an embrace with the treasures of this world. Imagine. A love let loose on the world and in our lives. A love without strings attached. A love stretched wide open to hold the whole creation in a new embrace! Imagine! And then go open up that box and let the treasure loose!

Prayer

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of love. Your love is so much more than we can imagine, so perfect, so beautiful that we have hugged it to our bosom and hidden it away to admire in secret. When what you have wanted was for us to let it loose upon this earth. For us to be extravagant and magnanimous with it, following the example of she who poured out the precious ointment on Jesus. Help us O Lord. Pry the box loose from our hands and open it wide that we may be bathed in your love and thus anointed, go out into all the world to share this treasure. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.