



SUNDAY SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 7, 2025

Prayer:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Old Testament2

Jeremiah 18:1-11 2

 The Potter and the Clay 2

 Overview 2

 Biblical Context..... 2

 Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context 2

 Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 3

 Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & Grant County Context 3

 Summary 3

Gospel.....4

Luke 14:25-33 4

 The Cost of Discipleship..... 4

 Overview 4

 Biblical Context..... 4

 Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context 4

 Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 5

 Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & Grant County Context 5

 Summary 5

Addendum6

Jeremiah 18:1–11 as a Script 6

You Reap what you Sow..... 7



Old Testament

Jeremiah 18:1-11

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

(Jeremiah shares God's warning to Judah)

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words."

So, I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Then the word of the Lord came to me: "Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done?" says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it.

And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it.

Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you, from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

OVERVIEW

Jeremiah 18:1–11 presents the famous image of the potter and the clay. God tells Jeremiah to go to a potter's house, where he sees the craftsman reworking clay that has been spoiled into a new vessel. God uses this image to explain His relationship with Israel: just as a potter shapes clay, so too God shapes nations. If a nation turns from evil, God will relent from disaster; if a nation turns to evil, He will withdraw His blessings. The passage ends with a stern warning for Judah to turn from their wicked ways before judgment falls.

See Addendum on this passage as a "Script".

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage falls within a section of Jeremiah (chapters 18–20) that emphasizes God's sovereignty and the looming judgment on Judah for its sins.

- The **potter and clay metaphor** illustrates God's authority as Creator and Judge.
- It recalls earlier covenant warnings (Deuteronomy 28), where obedience leads to blessing and disobedience leads to curse.
- Jeremiah is addressing a people who are stubborn and confident that their temple and heritage will shield them from harm. God makes it clear that such security is false without repentance.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

Jeremiah's ministry (late 7th–early 6th century BCE) occurred during a time of political upheaval:



- **Assyria** had declined, and **Babylon** was rising in power under Nebuchadnezzar. Judah sat precariously between these empires.
- King Josiah's reforms (around 622 BCE) had sought to return the people to covenantal faithfulness, but his death in 609 BCE led to a quick unraveling of religious and moral life.
- Politically, leaders believed alliances with Egypt or Babylon would preserve their independence. Spiritually, idolatry and injustice dominated society.
- The potter image would resonate with Jeremiah's audience, since pottery was a common trade and essential for daily life. People could easily grasp the lesson of reshaping clay as a metaphor for reshaping a nation's destiny.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Approx. 627–587 BCE:** Jeremiah's prophetic ministry.
- **609 BCE:** Josiah's death → decline of reform movement.
- **605 BCE:** First Babylonian victory at Carchemish; Judah begins paying tribute.
- **597 BCE:** First deportation to Babylon.
- **586 BCE:** Jerusalem and the temple destroyed.
Jeremiah 18 sits in the years leading up to 597 BCE, when warnings were still being given and repentance was still possible.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars see this passage as a profound metaphor of divine sovereignty balanced with human responsibility:

- The **potter** symbolizes God's control over history, but the clay's quality represents human moral choices. God is not arbitrary—He responds to the clay's (the nation's) willingness to be shaped.
- The warning highlights **conditional destiny**: outcomes depend on responsiveness to God.

Modern Day Application

- On a global scale, nations that turn toward justice, compassion, and integrity are more likely to thrive, while those built on corruption, division, and violence risk collapse.
- On a personal level, the metaphor invites self-reflection: Are we pliable clay, open to God's shaping, or hardened clay resisting transformation?

Grant County, Indiana Context

- Like Jeremiah's Judah, local communities face challenges: economic shifts, the decline of traditional industries, social divisions, and struggles with poverty and drugs.
- The potter's lesson is that change is still possible. If people are willing to be reshaped—whether through faith-based outreach, community renewal, or a turn toward compassion over self-interest—then decline need not be inevitable.
- Just as the potter starts over with spoiled clay, churches and civic leaders in Grant County can reshape community life by focusing on shared responsibility and repentance (turning from old, harmful patterns).

See Addendum on "You reap what you sow."

SUMMARY

Jeremiah 18:1–11 uses the image of a potter reshaping clay to illustrate God's sovereignty over nations and individuals. Israel (and Judah specifically) is warned that, like clay, they can be reshaped—but if



they resist, destruction awaits. The passage is both a threat of judgment and an invitation to repentance. In a modern context, it reminds us that neither individuals nor communities are fixed in their failures; with humility and willingness, God—or a community working in concert with Him—can reshape spoiled clay into something new and purposeful. For Grant County, it becomes a metaphor of hope: decline is not destiny if people allow themselves to be reshaped into vessels of justice, mercy, and renewal.

Gospel

Luke 14:25-33

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

(Jesus speaking to a large crowd on his way to Jerusalem)

Now large crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and said to them, “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.

“Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

“Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace.

“So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

OVERVIEW

Luke 14:25-33 contains some of Jesus’ most challenging words about discipleship. Speaking to large crowds, Jesus emphasizes the cost of following Him. He uses stark language about “hating” family and even one’s own life, bearing the cross, and renouncing possessions. To illustrate, He gives two parables: one about a man calculating the cost of building a tower, and another about a king considering whether to go to war. Both examples drive home the point that discipleship is not a casual decision but a commitment requiring forethought, sacrifice, and endurance.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage comes in Luke’s broader section where Jesus is journeying toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–19:27), preparing His disciples for what following Him truly entails. The verses immediately before (Luke 14:15-24) include the parable of the great banquet, which illustrates that many will decline God’s invitation while unexpected outsiders will accept it. In contrast, verses 25-33 pivot to stress that accepting the invitation is not enough—following Christ requires deep loyalty and costly commitment. Luke often emphasizes discipleship as radical, requiring detachment from wealth, family, and comfort (cf. Luke 9:23-25; 18:22-30).

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

In first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman society, family loyalty was paramount. Kinship defined one’s identity, inheritance, and social stability. Jesus’ demand to “hate” one’s family (understood figuratively



as “love less than”) would have sounded scandalous, even subversive, because it suggested placing allegiance to Him above even the strongest human bonds. Politically, Rome’s rule created a culture of calculated loyalty—toward Caesar, toward local rulers, and toward established family systems. For Jesus to insist on loyalty that superseded all of these was to redefine authority and allegiance in radical terms. His example of carrying the cross also had powerful political undertones: crucifixion was Rome’s brutal tool for crushing rebellion. To carry one’s cross meant embracing the shame and suffering of aligning oneself with a condemned criminal.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

This teaching occurs late in Jesus’ ministry, as He is heading toward Jerusalem (roughly AD 30–33). By this point, His popularity had attracted large crowds, but His teaching filters casual followers from true disciples. Historically, His words also foreshadow the trials early Christians would face after His death and resurrection. Many believers in the first century were indeed forced to choose between loyalty to family, possessions, or the Roman Empire and loyalty to Christ, often at the cost of persecution or death.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars interpret Jesus’ teaching here as a metaphor for total commitment, *not literal hatred of family*. The hyperbolic (exaggerated) language drives home the seriousness of discipleship: *loyalty to Christ must surpass all other loyalties*. The parables about planning emphasize that discipleship should not be entered lightly or impulsively—it demands preparation, endurance, and sacrifice.

Modern-day metaphor: In today’s world, this might parallel how people weigh major life commitments like marriage, military service, or starting a business. You don’t begin without counting the cost—time, finances, personal sacrifice. In a Grant County, Indiana context, where strong family ties, local traditions, and practical living are core values, this passage can be challenging but relatable. For instance:

- A young person may feel called to ministry, but their family wants them to stay in a steady local job.
- A farmer may wrestle with ethical practices that cost more but honor God’s creation.
- A factory worker might choose integrity (reporting unsafe practices or refusing dishonest shortcuts) even if it risks employment.

Each scenario mirrors the “counting the cost” Jesus spoke of—choosing allegiance to Him even when it clashes with family expectations, financial security, or social norms.

THESE ARE ALL COURAGEOUS ACTIONS!

SUMMARY

Luke 14:25-33 teaches that discipleship requires total commitment. Jesus demands that loyalty to Him must outweigh even family ties, personal comfort, and possessions. Using two parables, He urges His followers to count the cost before committing, just as one would before building or going to war. Historically, these words prepared His followers for real sacrifices in a hostile world. Metaphorically, they remind modern believers—including those in Grant County—that faith cannot be an afterthought or convenience; it requires intentional, sacrificial commitment, often in tension with cultural or familial expectations.



Addendum

Jeremiah 18:1–11 as a Script

Narrator (Jeremiah):

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:

The Lord:

“Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.”

Narrator (Jeremiah):

So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

The Lord:

“Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it.

And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it.

Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.’”

Notes on Voice

- **Jeremiah as Narrator** introduces the setting and describes what he sees.
- **The Lord** speaks directly to Jeremiah, then gives the explanation, and finally tells Jeremiah what to say to the people.
- It’s all essentially a back-and-forth between **Narrator Jeremiah** and **God’s voice**, with the potter serving as a silent visual prop.



You Reap what you Sow

“You reap what you sow” (Galatians 6:7) captures the **conditional nature** of Jeremiah 18: if you sow obedience and justice, you reap blessing; if you sow evil and idolatry, you reap disaster. It makes the potter’s lesson immediately practical for people used to cycles of planting and harvest.

Or more plainly: **“This passage shows that our choices shape our future — you reap what you sow.”**

Farming communities live in a rhythm of dependence: on rain, on soil, on sun, on timing. It’s faith-in-action every single season. Yet that dependence also means vulnerability — and it can turn into worry, frustration, or negativity, even though the same people would readily say “God provides.”

It reminds me of what Jeremiah was wrestling with: people *knew* God was the potter, yet they resisted trusting His reshaping. In a way, farmers know they can’t control the rain, but they still shoulder the stress of not having control.

Faith Vs. Negativity

- Faith trusts in the unseen outcome (the harvest that isn’t here yet).
- Negativity clings to what seems lacking in the moment (too much or too little rain, too much or too little sun).

We live in a community that knows faith, because farming is faith. But like Jeremiah’s people, we can slip into fear and frustration when we forget Who holds the harvest.