

Precious Balls of Clay



A man was exploring caves by the seashore. In one of the caves he found a canvas bag with a bunch of hardened clay balls. It was like someone had rolled clay balls and left them out in the sun to bake. They didn't look like much, but they intrigued the man, so he took the bag out of the cave with him. As he strolled along the beach, he would throw the clay balls one at a time out into the ocean as far as he could.

He thought little about it, until he dropped one of the clay balls and it cracked open on a rock. Inside was a beautiful, precious stone!

Excited, the man started breaking open the remaining clay balls. Each contained a similar treasure. He found thousands of dollars worth of jewels in the 20 or so clay balls he had left.

Then it struck him. He had been on the beach a long time. He had thrown maybe 50 or 60 of the clay balls with their hidden treasure into the ocean waves. Instead of thousands of dollars in treasure, he could have taken home tens of thousands, but he had just thrown it away!

It's like that with people. We look at someone, maybe even ourselves, and we see the external clay vessel. It doesn't look like much from the outside. It isn't always beautiful or sparkling, so we discount it.

We see that person as less important than someone more beautiful or stylish or well known or wealthy. But we have not taken the time to find the treasure hidden inside that person.

There is a treasure in each and every one of us. If we take the time to get to know that person, and if we ask God to show us that person the way He sees them, then the clay begins to peel away and the brilliant gem begins to shine forth.

May we not come to the end of our lives and find out that we have thrown away a fortune in friendships because the gems were hidden in bits of clay. May we see the people in our world as God sees them.

Appreciate every single thing you have, especially your friends. Life is too short and friends are too few.

(Author unknown)

A couple more thoughts:

“Doing” versus “Being”

We are so obsessed with *doing* that we have no time and no imagination left for *being*. As a result, people are valued not for what they are but for what they *do* or what they *have* – for their usefulness. When a person is reduced to their function, they are placed in a servile, alienated condition. They exist *for* someone else or even worse for some *thing* else.

The Hidden Beauty of Every Person

It was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin, nor desire, nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person each one is in God’s eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really *are*. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed . . .

(From Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*)