



IN THE FATHER'S HANDS

Theme Resource Pack
June 2024
(2 June - 6 July)

Introduction

In the Father's hands! Sometimes people say flippantly or fatalistically 'well it's in God's hands now' — as in 'there's nothing more we can do'. But when we reflect on the fact that we live and breathe in the shelter of God's the Father's hands — there's so much we can do!

This month we conclude our three month series looking at the Trinity by reflecting on our Father God. Wild Jesus regularly talks about and prays to His Father knowing that His Father loves Him and shows Him all He does (John 5: 20). One of the sparks the Spirit gives us is that we cry out 'Abba, dear father' (Romans 8: 15). We keep in mind that God the Father is one of heavenly understanding and not an earthly understanding.

We are reflecting on the care, creativity and generosity of our heavenly Father, who loves us dearly who empowers, encourages and energises us, side by side with Wild Jesus.

So, what are Father God's hands like? What does it mean to be in His hands? Hands that are safe. That are open. That are skilled. That are creative. That are ever resourceful. Hands that know how to sensitively sculpt, weave, cultivate, and nurture. Hands that are both powerful and gentle, unimaginably big and yet able to hold us close.

To help us picture the Father's hands we are going to be looking at a series of metaphors for the skilled craftsmanship of our loving Father God. In a world that knows only too well the pain of absent fathers we are comforted by the presence of our God — who has all the presence of the gifted artist lovingly crafting his art. We are beautiful dishes, a rich tapestry, a vibrant garden, and an endless canvass of God's grace.

Weekly Overview

- The Potter's Hands — *The Father's Goodness*
- The Weaver's Hands — *The Father's Vision*
- The Gardener's Hands — *The Father's Nurturing*
- The Artist's Hands — *The Father's Presence*
- The Hands of the Trinity: Artistry in Motion — *The Trinity Together*

Format

Every month we have a God-given theme delving into different aspects and areas of faith. Over the course of 2024 these themes connect and take us on a faith journey out into the wonders of life with Jesus. Our themes shape our Daily Worship, Sunday Live streams and all sorts of other creative things we get up to! It is broken into four sections that focus on a different topic each week. The weeks run Sunday - Saturday and each has a series of daily Bible readings and prompts for reflection.

The Potter's Hands (Week 1, 2 June)

Introduction: We begin our theme by picturing our Father God as a potter! This is an ancient metaphor inspired by an ancient art form that occurs multiple times in the Bible. This week we are thinking especially about the goodness of God. We will be reflecting on the thoroughness and sensitivity of God's hand's on care.

Setting the scene: Large hands covered in clay, gently working towards a shape on the pottery wheel.

Seeds to sow: As well as their hands, potters use a number of tools to shape and decorate their pots as they work the clay. One thing they use is a 'sprig mould' kind of like a stamp which can be pressed into the clay to create textures and designs. If God had a 'sprig mould' in your community, what designs and patterns would he be pressing into the clay?

- 1. Isaiah 64: 8 Wedging the clay.** We need God and God kneads us! Wedging is when potters work the clay to make it workable, consistent, and pliable. A potter doesn't simply grab a lump of clay and immediately start sculpting — in the same way God doesn't just grab us and bend us out of shape — God knows us and kneads us, supporting and strengthening us. Let's use this imagery to think about the sensitivity and goodness of God the Father.
- 2. Jeremiah 18: 1-6 Moulding the clay.** Perfectly balanced at the potter's wheel, making decisions, the care and diligence it takes. Let's use this analogy to think about the power behind God's goodness.
- 3. Jeremiah 31: 12-14 Drying the clay.** This reading speaks in anticipation of abundance, in expectation of return and renewal. But the dancing and the planting hasn't happened yet. Like the potter watching the drying clay, God knows good things are coming, even when all we can see is wet clay.
- 4. Jeremiah 31: 16-25 Fettleing the clay.** In the face of disaster and calamity, exile and displacement, loss and upheaval, God will take the clay and begin to fettle — to trim and shape, clean and repair, supporting the joints. Our God works with the clay — with our raw potential — the same way a potter works with clay — refining it, caring for it but respecting it.
- 5. 2 Corinthians 4: 7 First firing.** The first test as the pottery enters the kiln for its first firing! Will it hold? Will cracks appear? Clay makes a great metaphor for humanity — fragile, earthy, everyday and beautiful. God the Father loves us and can use all the broken pieces of our lives! Cracks are how the light gets in as Leonard Cohen said! Our imperfect clay forms can be beautiful vessels of grace. Kintsugi is the Japanese practice of mending cracks in broken pottery with gold.
- 6. Acts 14:17 Glazing the clay.** As a potter glazes pottery after its first firing, God glazes us with kindness and joy that holds the lustre, catching the light! Pottery glazing serves multiples purposes: it decorates the pottery piece, making it beautiful and vivid, it protects it, and makes it practical for everyday use. The kindness and joy God glazes us with also make us beautiful, helps protect us and make us useful!
- 7. Isaiah 43: 1-2 The Kiln.** We are not consumed! We are not lost! Even when formed in the fire! Oxides glazes react under heat creating complex patterns! Dirt and mud become beautiful, gleaming (and practical and useful) things of wonder!

The Weaver's Hands (Week 2, 9 June)

Introduction: Our Father God is handy on the loom as well as the pottery wheel! This week we think about God's vision, about the loving Father who knits us together, both individually and as communities — and across time and space!

Setting the scene: Weaving colourful strands of fabric with light and nimble fingers.

Seeds to sow: Imagine if being clothed in Christ (see Galatians 3: 26-29) was literal clothes — what would that outfit look like? What would it include? Use your imagination and have fun with it!

- 1. Ecclesiastes 3: 7 Having a vision of the whole pattern...** God the Father is like an expert tailor who knows to measure twice and cut once! God knows how to make the most of the fabric, how to cut the pattern pieces that will come together. Another image is a of a quilt maker, putting the patchwork together, cutting here and sewing there.
- 2. Psalm 139: 1-12 Knowing the fabric...** God the Father knows the warp and weft of all of us individually and it is with this knowledge that God can weave us together as whole communities, tapestries made of the bright threads of humanity, that God has taken the time to know.
- 3. Psalm 139: 13-14 Knitted together.** Nobody knows you like God!
- 4. Psalm 139: 15-18 A sense of scale.** We are each unimaginably smaller than God and yet unfathomably precious to him! Like each stitch and every fibre in a vast tapestry — we are all treasured and all part of realising the bigger picture.
- 5. 1 Corinthians 12: 12-26 God arranges the body.** God weaves us together through the central nervous system of Christ!
- 6. Ephesians 4: 14-16 Ligaments!** Where are the ligaments — the supporting stitches — that anchor and hold together the tapestry that God the Father makes out of us?
- 7. Galatians 3: 26-29 All one.** A tapestry of distinct but complementary threads — together in the glory of our diversity we reflect the image of God the Father back to him.

The Gardener's Hands (Week 3, 16 June)

Introduction: Now we join our Father God out in the garden, we stroll through the orchards, the vineyards, seeing the care and attention he gives to cultivating the ground, nurturing seedlings. The generous cultivation of the gardener turns water and sunshine and hope into wonderful fruit!

Setting the scene: Rough, nicked hands carefully placing seedlings in the earth.

Seeds to sow: Pruning is an important part of gardening, but how do we ensure that when we prune we do so in the same generous spirit as our Father God?

1. **Psalm 104 Beginning in awe.** We begin this week in the place of awe, amazed at the works of the Master Gardener!
2. **John 15: 1-4 My Father the gardener.** Contemplating the skilled hands of a gardener coaxing growth and fruit from the vine.
3. **John 15: 5-8 The Father's haul.** Even from what some might consider unpromising branches in rough soil, God the Father can spend time, abiding together, to harvest a rich haul of fruit!
4. **John 15: 9-11 The Father's love.** Abiding in the Father's garden, a nourishing place, that sustains and shelters us, and also a joyful place!
5. **John 15: 14-17 Friendship with God.** The Father and Son are a closely linked team and they invite us into their incredible relationship.
6. **Hosea 11: 1-4 Teaching them to walk.** A beautiful, heartbreaking picture.
7. **Isaiah 58: 1-12 A beautiful thriving garden!** God's timeless cry against injustice "Is not this the fast that I choose..." offers us a way of claiming our heritage of a vibrant well watered garden. It's a beautiful vision of how equality and fairness and dignity *feel* like the peace and shelter and beauty of a garden, tended by the Master Gardener himself - our Father God.

The Artist's Hands (Week 4, 23 June)

Introduction: The artistry of our Father God! An artist entirely absorbed, absolutely present. In a world that knows only too well the pain of absent fathers we are comforted by the presence of our caring, nurturing father God. Present in our lives.

Setting the scene: Hands covered in paint mixing new colours together.

Seeds to sow: If you were to close your eyes and imagine God painting a picture — what would you see on the canvass?

1. **Luke 12: 32-34 Art can teach us about value.** The best art can teach us about what truly matters — about values that can't ever have a price on them. Our artist Father God, fully present, show us the meaning of true worth.
2. **Luke 10: 21-22 Unexpected gifts and revelations.** God offers us insight and understanding, but not on our terms. Like an artist subverting our expectations visually — God can and does surprise us.
3. **Matthew 7: 7-11 Openhanded.** That said, our Father God is not a cryptic artist painting hidden messages and secret meanings — he is a loving Father who says come to me, come straight to me — I'm painting here, come see what I'm working on!
4. **Matthew 6: 5-6 God notices you.** We are not below God's notice — in our petty grandstanding or in our quiet humility — God sees us. God cares enough to register us with an artist's eye for composition, to see how the picture is coming together!
5. **Matthew 6: 8 God knows us so well.** Like an artist who has studied the colours and the canvas and the subject — God knows us each so well, our grain, our texture.
6. **Matthew 6: 24-34 Be in the moment.** As a painter catches a moment in time, slowing us down to notice it — God invites us to take it in — to take it all in! To not rush off to the next picture, the next exhibit, the next anxiety — but to see the beauty of this moment.
7. **Matthew 10: 26-31 Every hair on our head!** For God we are all foreground, we are all in focus, we are all rendered beautifully — we all fall under the loving care of our Father. We are in God's hands.

The Hands of the Trinity: Artistry in Motion (Week 5, 30 June)

Introduction: We draw our theme to a close with a week on the hands of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit coming together! At the heart of our faith, at the heart of Christianity is the Trinity — God-as-community, God as relationship!

Setting the scene: Three people dancing together.

Seeds to sow: How could we use pottery, sewing, gardening, painting or any other hands on craft or skill to learn more about the Trinity this year?

1. **Genesis 1: 1-2 In the beginning...** Father and Spirit in motion together.
2. **John 10: 22-30 One.** The Father and the Son, moving in concert together.
3. **Matthew 28: 19-20 Together in Baptism.** Father, Son and Holy Spirit in and through Baptism!
4. **John 5: 19-27 Inseparable.** The Father and Son are inseparable, step by step!
5. **Psalm 45: 6-7 & Hebrews 1: 8-12 An Anointing.** The Father anoints the Son!
6. **Psalm 22 A haunting Cry.** This heartbreaking psalm, quoted by Jesus on the cross, gives a haunting picture of separation — of reaching out to a God who seems too far, too remote. It is incredible that the Trinity endured this separation for our sake on the cross. But the hands of the Trinity reached out to one another again, and their hands reach out to us too...
7. **Revelation 22: 17 A generous invitation.** Let everyone who is thirsty come! The Hands of the Father, the hands of the Spirit, the hands of Jesus are open, wide open in invitation!