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There have been many famous potters, but one was revered above all others. His skill in producing large porcelain vases of intricate design, wonderfully decorated, was unparalleled. His pots quickly became collector's items and sold for huge amounts of money. His family never went hungry. His children had access to private education, and they had servants to look after them.

The potter didn't really care about the money. He loved his work and was simply delighted that his pots gave such pleasure to other people. There was, however, one pot he had never been able to bring himself to sell. This was a huge pot of such fine bone china, so delicate, so perfect, that he knew he might never be able to replicate the workmanship. He felt it represented the whole of his creative life. He kept it in pride of place in his home, carefully situated so that it could be seen but not be accidentally knocked over and broken.

As he got older, he began to realise that he was not going to live forever, his house was too large now he was by himself and he thought that he ought to give away some of his furniture and possessions to his family. This wasn't a problem to him, in fact he rather enjoyed the process. When it came to the pot, he realised that because he loved his sons, he was really pleased to be able to give it to them. He hoped his sons would enjoy his creation as much as he did. He obviously couldn't divide it, so he called all his sons together.

'This is yours', he said. 'It is your inheritance. It is the most valuable possession I have, probably worth more than all my other things put together. It will be yours to do with as you like. If you run into hard times, you can sell it, or you can keep it, deciding between you who will look after it.'

The sons talked together. 'Well we can't sell it while he's alive it would upset him too much'. 'Well, it is very beautiful, but I don't really want to look after it, not with my children running about the place – it would get broken'. One by one they all found reasons for not having it. They didn't want the responsibility. They actually began to resent the fact that their father had offered it to them. If only he had not mentioned it,

they could have sold it after his death and shared out the money and it would all have been so simple.

Their father gently pointed out that it had survived their childhood, and that all that was needed was a bit of preparation in the form of a few sensible changes to the layout of their furniture.

Then one of them said. 'I know, I will build a small brick shed to keep it in, where it will be totally secure until our houses are safe enough places to keep it or until we want to sell it.'

So that's what they did.

Their father lived for many more years and the sons got older; their children grew up. And do you know what?

Every year the sons said 'we ought to get out that vase, and then found good reasons to postpone it for a little longer. In the end, the sons never made those preparations, and eventually they forgot all about the shed and the vase and they even forgot to tell their children about it and it is still there, covered in dust, waiting to be discovered.

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Jesus told his disciples and the large assembled crowd, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Bigger, better, infinitely more precious than a vase.

Through Holy Scripture, we know that it is still our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. He longs for us to accept it and enjoy it.

We can accept it now, enjoy it in the present, by giving up our anxieties about having provision for the future, by trusting in God. We can have the kingdom in the future by protecting it as a treasure while we make the necessary preparations, put our lives in order, sort out our relationships and put right any wrongs we have done.

And in each age, a few people have indeed accepted this gift and found the kingdom all around them, now, in the present. They have lived lives of great joy, joy which has not been lessened by poverty or illness or grief, or persecution. You know instantly when you meet such a person. The light of the Spirit seems to shine within them.

But most of us put this treasure in a building labelled 'church', to be kept safe until some unidentifiable time when we will be ready and completed all our preparations. And there it stays. The words of eternal life. The words that bring hope and joy to the present locked in a building and forgotten. Why? Probably because the preparations carry with them too much change, too much responsibility. We want to make those changes, but not quite yet. There is always tomorrow.

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Jesus reminded his followers of the foolishness of that attitude. No. There is not always tomorrow. Sometimes, today is the final day – a statement not designed to bring gloom and despondency, but to bring freedom and joy.

Now is the time to enjoy the kingdom. It is all around us and it is eternal. All that's required is a little trust. Amen.