

Thought for the Day 19th May - John Reed

Back in the 15th Century in Florence, Italy, a sculptor by the name Agostino of Duccio set to work on a huge piece of beautiful Carrara marble. Apparently he made a mistake, or somehow something went wrong; and, deciding that rescuing the piece was beyond him, he abandoned it. Other artisans also thought the monstrous piece of marble known as "The Giant" was beyond redemption, and it lay untouched for decades. But in 1505, with the piece of marble possibly destined for scrap or building rubble, a young 25-year-old sculptor by the name of Michelangelo Buonarroti was asked if he thought anything could be done with it. He examined the block, carefully noting the imperfections caused by the bungling workman of an earlier day. At his first look at the block, as reported by many experts, he was able to "see" the already completed work at its inside. Michelangelo immediately set about setting his sculpture "free" from the useless layers of stone, first on one side and then on the other, carefully crafting the marble into the image he had in his head of the young shepherd boy and future king of Israel, David. When he was finished, apparently one of his students exclaimed, "Master, it lacks only one thing, and that is speech!" Michelangelo's David is now one of the best admired and renowned sculptures in the world.

That story stands as a powerful reminder that, like the block of marble, nothing – and no one – is ever beyond redemption. All it takes is for the hands of the right craftsman to see the potential and create a masterpiece out of that which others have given up on in despair.

Many circumstances may lead a person to echo the words of Job: *"My spirit is broken ... My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart"* (Job 17:1, 11); or of the Psalmist: *"I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart"* (Psalm 38:8).

And sometimes we feel that no one cares: *"Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none"* (Psalm 69:20).

But there one who cares, and can take the broken and discarded and restore them and use them for his glorious purposes: *"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit"* (Psalm 34:18); *"The LORD ...heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds"* (Psalm 147:2-3); *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). No matter what our hurts or failures may have been: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).