

# THE JADEITE CABBAGE

By Ellen C. Jensen

On my mission in Taiwan, my companion and I spent a little time during one preparation day at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. The main attraction is a piece of art called the Jadeite Cabbage. So many people were admiring it, but all I saw was a cabbage carved out of jade. It was pretty, no doubt, but there must have been something I was missing.

When we finished at the museum, I asked my companion, “What did you think of the Jadeite Cabbage?”

“I love that piece of art!”

“Why?” I asked. “It’s just a cabbage.”

“Are you kidding? The Jadeite Cabbage is a metaphor for my life!” she exclaimed.

“The cabbage?”

“Yes! Don’t you know the story?”

“Apparently not.”

She told me the story. And she was right. It became the metaphor for my mission and my life.

For a jade carving to have great value, the jade has to be one solid color. Carvings made out of perfect jade sell for high prices because it is nearly impossible to find perfect jade. The Jadeite Cabbage is green on

one end and white on the other, and it has cracks and ripples. No skilled carver would waste time on such a piece of jade, until someone came along whom the Chinese call a master carver.

If this jade could talk, I can imagine the conversation it would have with this new carver. I imagine the carver picking up this piece of jade.

“What do you want?” the jade would ask.

“I am looking for jade to carve,” the carver would say.

“Then find another piece. I am of no worth. I have two different colors so intertwined that you’ll never

separate them. I have cracks and ripples in me. I will never be of any worth. Don’t waste your time.”

“Oh, you silly little jade. Trust me. I am a master carver. I will make a masterpiece of you.”

What makes the Jadeite Cabbage so amazing is that this anonymous master carver used the weaknesses of the jade—the two colors, the cracks, and the ripples—to make the cabbage all the more lifelike. The opaque white part became the stem of the cabbage, and the cracks and ripples make the leaves come to life. If it weren’t for the “weaknesses” of this jade, it could not have looked so real.



## THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART

“In our world, moral character oftentimes seems secondary to beauty or charm. But from long ago the Lord’s counsel to Samuel the prophet echoes: ‘The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart’ (1 Samuel 16:7).”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Canaries with Gray on Their Wings,” *Ensign*, June 2010, 4.



Because of the beauty of this piece of art, it became a gift for one of the royalties in China and adorned the halls of beautiful Asian palaces until it ended up at the museum in Taiwan.

It reminds me of Ether 12:27: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. . . . My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”

After I saw the Jadeite Cabbage, this scripture began to take on new

light. We are all like this piece of jade, except that we are still in the process of being carved. We must trust the master carver, Jesus Christ, who will take our weaknesses and make them strengths. We, in our imperfect view, sometimes focus on our imperfections and then despair because we think we’ll never measure up. But our Savior, Jesus Christ, sees us as we can become. As we allow His Atonement to work in our lives, He will shape us into masterpieces who will one day live with the King of kings. ■

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### HOW CAN I SEE MYSELF AS THE MASTER SEES ME?

It’s a challenge to see ourselves as the Lord sees us. He sees us as children of God with great potential and great worth. But we sometimes focus on our shortcomings. Our Father in Heaven has not created us to dwell on our flaws but rather to become beautiful masterpieces. Through the gospel of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, we can overcome our shortcomings.

Consider reading the following scriptures to learn how the Lord uses imperfect people to accomplish His work: Exodus 4:10–12; Jeremiah 1:4–10; 1 Nephi 4:1–6; Alma 26:12; Doctrine and Covenants 35:17–18.