

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

Unholy Charade – YouTube Channel

Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah

Jeremiah as Luther – Preaching at the Church Door

November 15, 2020

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 7:1-11

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 7

If you speak about and expose evil, many times (especially in churches) you will be accused of being –

- Harsh
- Judgmental
- Self-righteous
- Unloving
- Too radical

...and on and on the list could go. Darkness is always striving to put out the light. Deceit is energetically working every moment to suppress God's truth (see Romans 1).

And yet – this is very important so think carefully about it – all through the Bible we see the Lord directing His servants such as Jeremiah, the other prophets, the Apostles (and us!) to do some pretty radical things. Things that sometimes look a little “crazy.”

A few weeks ago Verla and Craig and I went fishing on the ocean and on the way back home, right along highway 101 here is this guy, just walking along up the highway, totally naked!! When you see something like that you are like – “did I just see that?”

Well, I am not suggesting that we all go on some naked protest march, but did you know that this has happened at God's direction in the past?

Isaiah 20:1-6 ESV In the year that the commander in chief, who was sent by Sargon the king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and captured it— (2) at that time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, “Go, and loose the sackcloth from your waist and take off your sandals from your feet,” and he did

so, walking naked and barefoot. (3) Then the LORD said, “As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Cush, (4) so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, the nakedness of Egypt. (5) Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and of Egypt their boast. (6) And the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, ‘Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?’”

Radical evil requires radical righteousness. Evil is not exposed by “polite” words that refuse to speak or act outside of social niceties. Now, of course you might start hearing “amens” from radical leftists and revolutionaries at this point – but remember, the radical action we are speaking of here is that which is *truth, that which is spoken and enacted at the direction of the Lord*, not energized by some evil, wicked quest for power.

Here is another example:

Ezekiel 4:1-13 ESV “And you, son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, even Jerusalem. (2) And put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a mound against it. Set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around. (3) And you, take an iron griddle, and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel. (4) “Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. (5) For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel.

(6) And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year. (7) And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy

against the city. (8) And behold, I will place cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege.

(9) “And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and emmer, and put them into a single vessel and make your bread from them. During the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it. (10) And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from day to day you shall eat it. (11) And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin; from day to day you shall drink. (12) And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung.” (13) And the LORD said, “Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them.”

Radical evil requires radical light.

Think of Jesus. Did He “go too far”? Was He accused of failing to comply with accepted, societal norms? Of course. This is what inevitably happens when darkness is invaded by light.

Many people, preachers, church members and others who claim to follow Christ, are regularly silenced and fail to speak God’s truth because they don’t want to “step outside the lines of acceptable behavior.” But if you are going to follow Christ, then we must follow Him wherever He goes and no matter who doesn’t like it.

I remember years ago confronting sin in this church in a sermon and later, one of the most wicked charlatans in the congregation who had paraded as a real “servant of the Lord” for years, told me “It started out as a good sermon, but all of a sudden I was like....hey, wait...he is going way too far now!” That man was proven to be a liar and even to this day abuses his wife, as I know from first hand testimony.

Here at Jeremiah chapter 7 we come to still another place where the Lord had His prophet do something that was “outside” the lines of “acceptable behavior.” Here it is:

Jeremiah 7:1-11 ESV The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: (2) “Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter

these gates to worship the LORD.

(3) Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. (4) Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

(5) "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, (6) if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, (7) then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

(8) "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail.

(9) Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, (10) and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations?

(11) Has this house, which is called by

my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD.

There is soooo much here! Where to begin?

Radical Action

The Lord commanded and sent Jeremiah to *stand in the gate of the Lord's house and preach*.

This is *the Lord's house*. It is not the house of the people of Judah. It is not just some house like any other house. This is the holy, holy, holy tabernacle of the Lord where He dwelt among His people (though it appears the glory of the Lord, His presence, had long since departed as you read about in the opening chapters of Ezekiel). If there were any place on this earth where people should fear the Lord and approach Him in reverence with clean hands, it should have been this place.

When you go to someone's house, unless you are a totally rude and selfish person, you understand that it is not *your* house. So you adjust your behavior accordingly to show kindness and respect. You don't impose *your* house rules in someone else's house.

If you went to a king's palace, how would you behave? How would you dress? And if you weren't truly a loyal subject of that king, you would be a very treacherous and wicked person if you went to his palace anyway and pretended you were.

Here is radical action against radical wickedness and it is confronted by God's prophet right at the entrance of God's house. Imagine people today – your average church members in a so-called church filled with hypocrites – coming to the church building on Sunday and being met at the door by a Jeremiah! “Stop right there! Hear the Word of the Lord to you!”

And it wasn't going to be a word that they are going to be happy with! Here is the sermon outline:

- Listen to the Lord!
- You come here to worship Him
- Stop where you are!
- Amend your evil ways
- If you repent, I will permit you to live here
- If you don't repent, I will throw you out of this country
- Stop listening to the lying words of your priests and prophets

- Don't think that the fact that this temple building is here in your city means you can live any way you want and I will just keep blessing you.
- I see all that you are doing. You are oppressing the weak. You even kill innocent people. You worship false gods.
- I am incensed against you in my wrath because you steal, you murder, you commit adultery, you lie, you give offerings to Baal...and *then you come here!*
- And in all of this evil, you tell yourselves “we are delivered” from any judgment of any kind.
- Then you leave after the “worship service” and go right back doing the evil things you have been doing all along.

Notice that it is here that the Lord Jesus drew His imagery for the rebuke of the Pharisees in His day – that of the temple being a den of robbers. I have this written in the margin of my Bible at verse 11 –

“A ‘den’ is a lair, a hideout where evil men find safety. The ‘church’ becomes a den of robbers when wicked men flee to church on Sunday, are pronounced

forgiven, and then go right back to doing the evil they have doing all along.”

What happens to the innocent if they are thrown into a den of robbers? Go find a lion’s den and crawl in and see what happens! That is the picture we are given here of what these evil people had turned the Lord’s house into.

God’s house is a place of blessing and safety for the righteous. His house, His temple, is where His Spirit resides and in our day, in this church age, that place is the church. The body of Christ. The true people of God who are in Christ. When people come to His church in authenticity, in repentance, seeking His forgiveness and His truth in Christ, they will find what? That He rips them apart and abuses them? No! They find this:

Jeremiah 6:16 ESV Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, **and find rest for your souls....**

NOTE: Jesus words here show us that HE is the “ancient path” –

Matthew 11:29-30 ESV Take my yoke

upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls.** (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

This is a pattern with the wicked who are evil and yet wear a disguise of “godliness.” It is extremely common in the visible church and we should not be surprised because God has given us so much warning and teaching about it in Scripture. Here is another such place:

Isaiah 1:10-20 ESV Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! (11) “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

(12) “When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? (13) Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. (14) Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates;

they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

(15) When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. (16) Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, (17) learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Now, in light of all of this consistent and frequent teaching in Scripture, I want us to challenge our thinking about the visible church. Not about the true church, the remnant, the Israel of God – but about the visible church which we can see and join in this present world. Here is my question:

Do you expect and think that most local churches, most (let's say conservative) church denominations and organizations, are led by and populated with the true, regenerate people of God and to think otherwise is being too harsh and judgmental?

Or let me put it another way:

Do you think that what you have been taught – directly or indirectly – about what you should think about the church you grew up in or the churches in your town or the professing Christian entities we read about and whose conferences we attend and so on – are most assuredly in the majority populated by the real people of God? And that to think otherwise is to be self-righteous and sinful?

Because, if this is how you think, and I certainly used to think this way because it was what I was always taught – then you necessarily must be critical of what Jeremiah is doing here at the gate of the temple! In your mind, you are thinking that well, in Jeremiah's day things were different. Boy, those people of Judah were really wicked. But look at this New Testament verse that tells us how we are to read our Bibles:

1 Corinthians 10:1-6 ESV For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, (2) and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, (3) and all ate the same spiritual food, (4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was

Christ. (5) Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. (6) Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

Which era in the history of the church has been free of such a condition? Every single Reformer had to do what Jeremiah did. Preach to the visible church, stand in it's door way and confront the evil that would come in to "worship." Jeremiah here necessarily causes us to think about Martin Luther and his 95 theses, right? Standing at the gate of Rome, you might say. Of Jesus Himself standing in the face of corrupt, false religion in Jerusalem and announcing, "you must be born again!"

Would you have stood with Jeremiah that day there at the temple entrance? If you did, you would have found yourself numbered with a very, very few people like him and you would have been rejected and put out of "the church." But then, that is where you would meet Christ.

John 9:32-38 ESV Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born

blind. (33) If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." (34) They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. (35) Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (36) He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" (37) Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." (38) He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.