

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

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Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah

Idolatry is a Family Affair

November 22, 2020

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 7:13-29

Scripture Reading: Psalm 106

Jeremiah 7:13-29 ESV And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, (14) therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. (15) And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.

(16) “As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you. (17) Do you

not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? **(18) The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven. And they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger.**

(19) Is it I whom they provoke? declares the LORD. Is it not themselves, to their own shame? (20) Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, **my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched.”**

(21) Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. (22) For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. **(23) But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my**

people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'

(24) But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. (25) From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. (26) Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.

(27) "So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. (28) And you shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips. (29) "Cut off your hair and cast it away; raise a lamentation on the bare heights, for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.'

This morning I want to emphasize 4 very important biblical doctrines found

in this portion of chapter 7, and all through the entire Bible. They are:

1. There are people we are not to pray for.
2. Children are taught and embrace the sins of their parents – and incur God's wrath upon themselves.
3. Man's sin has brought a curse upon the entire creation.
4. True religion is of the heart, not of external forms.

Don't Pray for Them

Most of us who have grown up in the church have been taught for years from the pulpits, in books, and at conferences and so on that *no one is beyond the hope of salvation*. That is a lie. It is a denial of the plain, repeated teachings of the Bible. There are in fact *many* people who are beyond any hope of salvation, and we see this doctrine taught right here in Jeremiah 7-

(16) "As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you.

Let me cite other scriptures that teach this as well:

Jeremiah 11:14 ESV “Therefore do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble.

1 John 5:16 ESV If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.

Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Hebrews 10:26-27 ESV For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for

sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Hebrews 12:15-17 ESV See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; (16) that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. (17) For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

I have seen professing Christians rail against any suggestion that no one can ever be beyond Christ’s salvation. That no sin is what John calls “a sin unto death.” But such claims are blatant denials of God’s Word.

What kind of person is what we call “reprobate”? Well, they are people like Jeremiah’s wicked fellow countrymen. They are like Esau. *They are people whom the Lord has called to faith and repentance in the gospel over and over and over and over – but who harden their evil hearts and refuse.* They are not people who are – well, consider what these Corinthians were:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ESV Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Christ. And so the Lord commanded His disciples to move on.

I tell victims of domestic abusers – the kind of abusers who claim to be Christians, who wear the “holy saint” disguise and have done so for years – *your abuser will never, ever change.* He is an Esau and you can treat him as such. Don’t keep trying to save him! Don’t waste your time praying for him or her. Let me give you an example that was sent to me recently –

No, the reprobate is a person who has tasted how good the gospel is, who knows the truths God has revealed to him or her, who has even received a work of the Spirit of God that shows them the truth of the gospel – and yet they trample in unbelief Christ’s blood. Continually. Habitually. Until at some point, the Lord says, “enough!” He withdraws from them and hands them over to judgment.

These are the kind of people we are not to pray for. They are the people who the disciples went to, announced the good news of Christ to them, even showed them God’s power in signs and wonders and miracles, but they would not have

Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.
This is curious to me when considering one who....

Reads through the Bible every year faithfully,
Can take Scripture from nearly any book, even the small ones, and apply to any and all situations,
Apparently prayed earnestly to have wisdom like Solomon... more on that later,
Serves in ministry. Served in church.
Serves others,
Gives Scriptural counsel and helps many,
Lives upright before the world.

Yet like Solomon, this man turned aside into false ways. Looking to power in the elements, looking to power in the regular cycles of the moon, he called for blessings. He "preached" that it is acceptable to manipulate creation in order to have prosperity in all that he does. He looked to clear his chakras [Hindu, Buddhist mystical teaching] and open his third eye. He secretly admired the druids. He cast spells. He keeps crystals around to clear the negative energy.

It took distance and time to understand fully what had happened. No, this is not a higher understanding of God. Rather, it is seeking to BE God.

This man worked at a well-known Christian institution. You don't pray for a person like this. God will not hear prayers for such a wicked one's salvation.

The Apple Doesn't Fall Far

I titled this sermon *Idolatry is a family affair*. Here is why:

(17) Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the

streets of Jerusalem? (18) The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven. And they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger.

Understand? In Jeremiah's day, the people of Judah had descended into idolatry so far that *the entire family, including the children, participated*. There is an old saying that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. This is an example – the children were reared in a tree of idolatry and even when they left the tree they remained under it. Such evil! These parents had their children out and about gathering wood for the idol fire.

Often we think of the family. People want to have (at least many do) a home, a family, a hearth, mom and dad, the children. Working together – here is mom in the kitchen baking bread, there are the kids out putting in the firewood, and there is dad getting things all set to get the fire going so that bread can be baked. Picturesque!

But how many such scenes today are really just replays of what was happening in Jeremiah's day? Because if the god of that household is not

Christ, then all of this activity is being done for a false god of some kind. There are soooo many different idols – each household can have its own.

And so, the challenge to all parents and grandparents is – what god are we teaching our children to worship? And let me also issue this challenge:

Children, including all of us because we are ALL children of someone, need to carefully reflect on what god they were taught to worship as they grew up. Because if we do not carefully think about these things and if we do not ask the Lord to open our eyes, then we are going to continue to embrace the errors that were passed on to us. We will keep, you might say, gathering wood for the idol fire.

Man's Sin has Brought the Curse on Creation

(20) Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched.”

As you look at this verse and think about it, something strikes you as odd, right? We know why God's wrath was on the wicked people, but why on *beast, trees, and crops*? Those things had done nothing wrong. It has happened before – in the 5th plague:

Exodus 9:5-6 ESV And the LORD set a time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.” (6) And the next day the LORD did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died.

The answer is found in Romans:

Romans 8:19-22 ESV For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. (20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

And in Jeremiah-

Jeremiah 12:4 ESV How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because they said, “He will not see our latter end.”

The curse came upon all of creation when Adam sinned. If people today really wanted to be true environmentalists, they would repent and turn to Christ because it is only in Him that the curse will be lifted. There is coming a new heavens and earth which will be a fully restored creation. Plants, animals, the soil – everything will be restored.

Obedience, Not Sacrifice

(23) But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.’

Man in his sin always defaults to *external, formal, religion*. In the case of the Jews, they focused on the doings of the Old Covenant – sacrifices, offerings, annual festivals and so on. What they ignored was the true sacrifice the Lord looks for – loving and

obeying Him. Jeremiah’s countrymen were quite religious, externally. Like many people today, they went through the motions of religion. Church on Sunday. Baptism, Tithing, But what the Lord really required, they do not offer. Namely, a heart that loves the Lord.

We see it here in the Psalms –

Psalms 51:16-17 ESV For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. (17) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

You know that Christ rebuked this in the Pharisees:

Matthew 23:23-28 ESV “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. (24) You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! (25) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but

inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (26) You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. (27) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. (28) So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

This is what Nicodemus was ignorant of but should have known. *You must be born again.* Those who are will fulfill the greatest two commandments which encompass all the others.

Empty, external religion practiced by people who only go through the motions but who walk in wickedness will only pile up greater and greater heaps of God's wrath. It will do all of us well to carefully examine ourselves and be certain that we are obeying Christ's voice, walking in His way, and doing so because we love Him.