

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah

Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

November 29, 2020

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 8-9

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 8-9

Matthew 25:29-30 ESV For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (30) And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This morning we are going to consider several portions of Jeremiah chapters 8-9 which we have just read. As we hear these pronouncements of God's righteous judgments on the people of Judah, we need to keep in mind that it is a vivid picture of the coming day of judgment in which Christ will say to the

wicked, "cast them away into outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." While we have pictures of Christ's salvation of His remnant as well, the judgment of the wicked is set out at length, not only serving as a warning to the people of Jeremiah's day, but to our nation today and to every single individual person.

False Gods Cannot Save

Jeremiah 8:1-3 ESV "At that time, declares the LORD, the bones of the **kings** of Judah, the bones of its **officials**, the bones of the **priests**, the bones of the **prophets**, and the bones of the **inhabitants of Jerusalem** shall be brought out of their tombs.

(2) And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, **which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped**. And they shall not be gathered or buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. (3) Death shall be preferred to life by all the remnant that remains of

this evil family in all the places where I have driven them, declares the LORD of hosts.

When Babylon came and utterly destroyed Judah and its cities, leveling Jerusalem, slaughtering the people and carrying off others into captivity, even the tombs there would be desecrated. The bones of those who led the nation into wickedness – the kings, the government officials, the priests, the prophets – would be unearthed and spread out as in a landfill garbage dump.

And specifically we see the justice of the Lord in this:

(2) And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, **which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped.**

The irony is this – these false gods which they had embraced – the sun and the moon and the stars – cannot help them in that day. It is the Lord saying “go ahead, call on your idols to make your dead bones live again.” But they

will not hear, they cannot see, and they cannot deliver.

I wonder if part of the Day of Judgment will be this very thing? The wicked called to the bar of Christ’s judgment, the idols they worshipped exposed,

Psalms 115:4-8 ESV Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. (5) They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. (6) They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. (7) They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. (8) Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

Those who make them become like them. You become like the god you worship. So, the pertinent and vital question is – *what god are we worshipping?*

Birds Have More Sense

Jeremiah 8:4-7 ESV “You shall say to them, Thus says the LORD: When men fall, do they not rise again? If one turns away, does he not return? (5) Why then has this people turned away in

perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit; they refuse to return.

(6) I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly; no man relents of his evil, saying, ‘**What have I done?**’ Everyone turns to his own course, like a horse plunging headlong into battle.

(7) Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming, but my people know not the rules of the LORD.

We have lots of waterfowl here in our area. Huge flocks of geese and ducks which are migratory birds. They know when it is time to return – north or south depending on the season.

Here, Jeremiah (remember, he is preaching to the people at the temple entrance – to these crowds of “religious” people who have come with their offerings to go through the motions of religion) – here Jeremiah tells them that the birds have more sense than they do.

They have stumbled and fallen, their backsliding disobedience and sin is *perpetual*. But they refuse to get up

again. Refusing to repent of sin is just that stupid. We were made for the Lord. To enjoy Him and have fellowship with Him. When we stray from Him by sinning, we are departing from the very life and purpose which we are created for. People who will not repent and turn back to Him are as twisted and stupid as someone who falls down and never gets up. Just going to stay here on the ground and crawl.

Notice that there is a very pithy and accurate summary here of what repentance looks like:

“...relents of his evil, saying, ‘What have I done?’”

True repentance is an awakening. If you are a real Christian, if you have been born again, then you have experienced this. You turned from your evil course which was taking you away from the Lord, and your eyes were opened and you said to yourself and the Lord – *What have I done?* – as the enormity of your sin swept over you. It is like this:

Acts 2:36-37 ESV Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (37) Now when they heard

this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

But there was none of that confession in Judah of Jeremiah’s day. There was no great awakening. And I do not think there will be on the Day of Judgment either. The weeping and gnashing of teeth will not proceed from hearts that truly are grieved for their evildoing and sorrow for what they had done to Christ – no. They weep and wail only because of their destiny in hell and gnash their teeth out of hatred for Christ.

The Destiny of a Corrupt Clergy

Jeremiah 8:8-12 ESV **“How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us’? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.** (9) The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; behold, **they have rejected the word of the LORD,** so what wisdom is in them?

(10) Therefore I will give their wives to others and their fields to conquerors, because from the least to the greatest everyone is **greedy for unjust gain; from prophet to priest,** everyone deals

falsely. (11) **They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.**

(12) Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; **they did not know how to blush.** Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the LORD.

The book of Jeremiah contains a large amount of the Lord’s pronouncements against the wicked prophets and priests and scribes – the clergy – of that time. The “church” had become absolutely corrupt. Look at it:

- They claimed to possess and be experts on God’s Word, thus having God’s favor
- They twisted that Word, even in their copying of it, so that it became a lie
- They were motivated by greed
- The false gospel they preached was not God’s Word. The peace they promised was a lie.
- They made religion “easy.” The remedy for sin and guilt was a

very light price to pay – no worries.

- They were ashamed of none of this evil. They had lost the ability to even blush at what they were doing.

God’s judgment would be particularly severe upon these kind – these false shepherds to led His people astray.

And it still is today. Largely in the world of local Christian churches and denominations and Christian entities, this same evil is playing itself out again. The “experts” on Scripture twist it and distort it – their lying pen and words turn it into a lie. They preach a false gospel, and why? Because they are greedy for unjust gain.

I can tell you story after story after story of wicked, evil false pastors and church leaders who, with the goal of preserving the finances and image of their organizations, twist the Word of God and cruelly oppress Christ’s real people. It is not rare. It is becoming, if not already become, the norm. Greedy for unjust gain – money, personal glory, lust for power and control.

This is why we have our online outreach through which we invite

Christ’s real people to come and join us in this church. Because there are sooo many people who have been sorely and grievously treated by the wicked, including and especially by wicked counterfeit false shepherds like these that Jeremiah confronted. And who are sick of the Word of God being perverted by “lying pens” today.

Are you aware, for example, that with regular frequency local churches in which the pastors KNOW a man is abusing his wife and children, or who is unrepentantly walking in gross sin, will permit such a man (and sometimes a woman) to continue in “ministry” in the church? Youth leader. Sunday school teacher. Elder. Deacon. Member. They not only refuse to expel the wicked one, they boast about how merciful and forgiving they are – and they viciously attack anyone who speaks out against this evil. This is NOT rare. It is in fact the norm.

To these false shepherds today who are boasting about their fame and who are enjoying the applause of the crowds – *your day is coming.*

Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall
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be overthrown, says the LORD.

I can hear C.H. Spurgeon describing the coming terror and judgment upon this kind of ambassadors of the devil when he would paint a word picture of a text like this:

Jeremiah 8:15-17 ESV We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror. (16) “The snorting of their horses is heard from Dan; at the sound of the neighing of their stallions the whole land quakes. They come and devour the land and all that fills it, the city and those who dwell in it. (17) For behold, I am sending among you serpents, adders that cannot be charmed, and they shall bite you,” declares the LORD.

Do you hear it? Listen carefully in the distance. It grows closer and closer. While you were convincing My people that they would enjoy My peace and favor, the snorting of war horses is heard in the north. The ground is starting to shake as that mighty and cruel army comes to devour you. This is a plague of snakes more deadly than that in the days in the Wilderness. They bit, and there is no brazen serpent to deliver you.

This is God’s word to the wicked today, and it is in particular His word to the greedy, self-glorifying preachers of a false gospel.

We Take no Joy in it All

Jeremiah 8:18-22 ESV My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me. (19) Behold, the cry of the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land: “Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not in her?” “Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols?” (20) “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” (21) For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded; I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me. (22) Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?

We can identify here with Jeremiah. We love our country. We do want God to bless America. We love the freedom we enjoy here and we hate assaults against it. But we see soooo many people in this nation walking in wickedness, increasing in wickedness,

and the inevitable results of that evil are spreading. As hard as those days must have been back in the 1940's during WWII, I often wish I lived back then. The nation was united against a common enemy. People were willing to sacrifice for freedom. But today, like Jeremiah,

My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me.

And this has been going on for decades.

Look at verses 21-22 again:

(21) For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded; I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me. (22) Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?

Jeremiah likens the condition of the nation to a wound. It is a nation wounded grievously and really, fatally, by sin. He longs for a remedy. A cure. He seeks a "balm in Gilead." No doubt that was a region of the land in which some medicine was found. Gilead was a region to the east of the Jordan River

and even back in Genesis we read of it being famous for healing balsams. Jeremiah speaks figuratively – *is there no remedy for this sin sickness of my people?*

We Also Hate the Evil

Now, at the same time the Christian grieves over the wickedness of his nation and the evils it brings upon us, we also hate that evil and long for the justice of God. So chapter 9 begins:

Jeremiah 9:1-9 ESV Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

(2) Oh that I had in the desert a travelers' lodging place, that I might leave my people and go away from them! For they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men. (3) They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, declares the LORD. (4) Let everyone beware of his neighbor, and put no trust in any brother, for every brother is a deceiver, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. (5) Everyone deceives his

neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity. (6) Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the LORD.

(7) Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: “Behold, I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do, because of my people? (8) Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully; with his mouth each speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart he plans an ambush for him. (9) Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?

Jeremiah’s weeping, you see, turns to a detesting of the evil throughout the nation. He loves his nation and yet sometimes he wishes he could leave these people and just go out in the wilderness and live there.

I think every real Christian thinks about this at times just as Jeremiah did. You find yourself thinking – where is some place that I can go and live and get away from all this evil? I would build a nice cabin there in the mountains and just be

by myself or with a very few select friends.

Well if you are like me, you go down the list of places, checking each one off when you realize it won’t suffice, and you come up empty. Because the truth is *there is no such place on this present earth*. There are some places that are more wicked than others for sure – but there is no place in this world free of evil.

This is the hungering and thirsting for righteousness that Jesus spoke about in the Sermon on the Mount. It is something that every real Christian experiences. We want Christ to come soon not only so we can be with Him, but also so that His perfect justice upon the wicked will be carried out.

There is a Balm in Gilead

The good news of the gospel is that, as it turns out, there is a balm in Gilead – as that old hymn puts it – that heals the sin sick soul. That balm is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ and His perfect salvation by faith alone in Him alone. There is a remedy for sin – His death in our place on the cross.

And more – there is that “cabin in the mountains” we long for only it isn’t just a cabin. It’s a mansion prepared for us by Christ Himself in a new heavens and new earth where we will never have to grieve again for a nation perishing in sin.