

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

*You Must be Born Again!*

[www.sermonaudio.com/crc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/crc)

[www.unholycharade.com](http://www.unholycharade.com)

[www.lightfordarktimes.com](http://www.lightfordarktimes.com)

Unholy Charade – YouTube Channel

## *Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah*

Typical Characteristics of the  
Wicked – Be Wise

*November 8, 2020*

**Sermon Text:** Jeremiah 5-6

**Scripture Reading:** Jeremiah 5-6

Here is a Scripture that has become one  
of my favorites:

Hebrews 5:13-14 ESV for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. (14) But solid food is for the mature, for **those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.**

Do you understand? Evil is so deceptive, it is such a master at wearing a disguise of “good,” that most people, including most professing Christians,

are not *capable of discerning right from wrong!!* We cannot run a marathon without *training*. And we cannot *distinguish good from evil* unless our *powers of discernment – our ability to recognize evil – is trained to do so.*

One of the first steps in being trained in all this is humility. Acknowledging that we are not trained and need to be. Without this humble admission, which most people are too proud to make, we are going to be duped by evil, we will oppress the good. *We will remain unskilled in the word of righteousness* as the Apostle puts it. And as a result, we will be taken in by false teachings, by wicked perversions of Scripture.

This discernment then is something we must crave and seek. We must ask the Lord to train us, by His Word and by His Spirit *and notice that this takes constant practice!* It requires a serious, prayerful, regular digesting of God’s Word.

One of the things we learn in this training about good and evil, is that the wicked have certain characteristics that

are quite typical and common. We go a long way in not being duped by them when we are grounded in spotting these traits and tactics in them. And remember, the specific kind of evildoers we are learning about here in Jeremiah are the *religious hypocrites*. They are these:

Jeremiah 7:2-3 ESV “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.

Let's do a bit of training in righteousness then right now. We have already read chapters 5-6 this morning, so let's zoom in now on some of the things Jeremiah says here.

### The Wicked Pretend to be Good

Jeremiah 5:1-2 ESV Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her. (2) Though they say, “As

the LORD lives,” yet they swear falsely.

Jeremiah 5:12 ESV They have spoken falsely of the LORD and have said, ‘He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine.

Jeremiah 6:20 ESV What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba, or sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to me.

Jeremiah's countrymen were *religious*. Their talk was “God talk.” “As the Lord lives,” permeated their speech much as “The Lord Bless You,” and other such pious sounding phrases are used by these kind today.

These were, you might say, “church-going people.” They made their offerings and sacrifices – even at some rather great expense. We will see Jeremiah rebuking them right at the door of the temple in chapter 7 –

Jeremiah 7:2-3 ESV “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.

I know people who live in the South here in the United States. Here in our area there is less of what we would call “cultural Christianity.” People do not so much become church members – they just don’t go to church on Sunday at all. There is plenty of religious hypocrisy here, but in the South this business of an outward show of religion is much more entrenched. People there use the Lord’s name all the time. They pray. They go to church on Sunday. They build fine church buildings. But much of it is a show. A disguise that wicked people put on. Evil is rampant in such places, but it is covered up.

The next trait of evil then follows this one -

### They Infiltrate God’s People

Jeremiah 5:26-28 ESV For wicked men are found among my people; they lurk like fowls lying in wait. They set a trap; they catch men. (27) Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full

of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich; (28) they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.

As I grew up on the church, I was taught that everyone who was at church every Sunday was a Christian. The pastor gave an altar call at the close of every service, just in case there happened to be the one or two who were not born again, but I would never have questioned or imagined that most all of them were unsaved.

Look again at just how widespread this can be:

Jeremiah 5:1 ESV Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her.

Understand this then: *Hypocrisy, that is to say “counterfeit Christianity,”* is like leaven. It spreads. It infects if it is not detected and dealt with. Wicked men will be found among God’s people and

if God's people are not wise, that infection will spread quickly so that a church or Bible college or other Christian group that was originally founded solidly on Christ, will be unrecognizable in a rather short time.

So here is wisdom. Here is training in discerning good from evil – *expect counterfeits who look like the genuine article on the surface to creep in among God's people.* This wisdom is largely opposed today in the churches. People don't want to hear it. As a result, evil thrives.

#### Evil can be Found in all Classes of Society

Jeremiah 5:3-5 ESV O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent.

(4) Then I said, "These are only the poor; they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God. (5) I will go to the great and will speak to them, for they know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God."

But they all alike had broken the yoke; they had burst the bonds.

Here we must take care as well if we are to be wise. Jeremiah saw an amazing thing in the people around him. The Lord had been pretty severely chastising them for their sin as an impetus for them to repent. He struck them down. He consumed them – pretty intense words! *But they refused to take correction.*

I was going to deal with this point later, but let's look at it now and then come back to this business of evil in all classes of society –

Jeremiah 6:28-30 ESV They are all stubbornly rebellious, going about with slanders; they are bronze and iron; all of them act corruptly. (29) The bellows blow fiercely; the lead is consumed by the fire; in vain the refining goes on, for the wicked are not removed. (30) Rejected silver they are called, for the LORD has rejected them."

The bellows of God's wrath blow fiercely upon them, working to refine the pure from the dross. But what happened? There wasn't any pure! The

wicked were not removed, so thoroughly had the nation become apostate.

If you have known and had experiences with wicked people, you know how stubbornly set in their sin they are. Many times their sin has brought misery upon them in one form or another. God is not blessing them. But will they take correction? Do they look at themselves and say, “this path I am on is not leading me to anything good”? No. The Prodigal coming to his senses in the pig pen is very rare today it seems. You cannot help this kind of person. God Himself cannot help them. This is a characteristic then of the wicked and if we are going to be wise we need to see it. Otherwise they are going to manipulate us and deceive us and they are going to take and take and take from us and use and use and use us and keep us from doing the real work God has called us to do.

Let’s return then to this matter of evil in all classes of society. Jeremiah found this out. He wondered if the wickedness around him was primarily due to poverty and lack of education. So he resolved to go and speak to the upper echelons. The educated. The wealthy. What did he find? His theory didn’t

hold. They were just as wicked and stubborn as everyone else.

In fact, what you often find is that it is the more highly educated, the “refined” and more privileged portion of society that is the most evil and the most stubbornly unrepentant:

1 Corinthians 1:26-27 ESV For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

If you read the biography of George Whitefield you will see this plainly played out. He was resisted by the educated and rich – the upper levels even of the Church of England. But when he preached outside to the poor coal miners, he said you could see the streams of tears running down their blackened faces as they heard the gospel.

So we must be wise and take care that we don’t show favoritism in the church and by practice announce that the more

“refined and genteel” are going to be more open to hearing God’s Word, or that we assume that due to their standing and successes God must be blessing them.

### Prosperity Strengthens the Wicked

Jeremiah 5:7-8 ESV “How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores. (8) They were well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife.

Here is still another nugget of wisdom about the wicked which we dare not be ignorant of. Prosperity and blessing from the Lord only feeds their sin. God had richly blessed Israel, and what happened? Did they give Him thanks and obey Him? No. They only were energized to chase after evil even more. In fact, what they did and what they still do today is, *assume that God accepts and blesses them because of the prosperity they are receiving*. And that kind of prosperity “gospel” is spread by their false prophets and priests.

Jeremiah 5:30-31 ESV An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: (31) the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?

Jeremiah 6:13-14 ESV “For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. (14) They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.

Once more, we must be wise. We do not want to “feed” evil. We don’t want to be drawn in to enabling evildoers in their sin. Listen to Jesus:

John 6:26-27 ESV Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, **but because you ate your fill of the loaves.** (27) Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

Wicked, unrepentant people only seek Jesus for the “stuff” they want. We see

this all the time here. People whose lives are in some kind of mess that their own sins have gotten them into. So here they come, apparently wanting Christ. And they can certainly sound very convincing. But they need to hear what Jesus told those crowds – “you are only here for the bread. You need the real food that Christ gives.” Most won’t listen and often they get very angry that we didn’t give them their “stuff.”

### Evildoers Deny they are to Blame

Jeremiah 5:19 ESV And when your people say, ‘Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?’ you shall say to them, ‘As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.’”

Evil is a master at blaming. The sins of Judah were widespread and obvious for everyone to see. Idolatry was under every tree and high place and in every home. And the Lord as we have seen was already chastising them for it. What was their response?

*“Why has the Lord our God done all these things to us?”*

People can be in a real pig pen in their life. That pig pen might take different forms, but its cause is the same – sin. The sinner’s sin. But what do the vast majority of the wicked do? *They lay the blame elsewhere.* And they are masters at it. If you are not wise, you will end up wearing that blame and guilt which belongs on them!

I have observed this to be a sure sign of a lying, unrepentant fake. This business of *blaming*. This “it’s everyone else’s fault but mine.” This is emphasized many times in the Bible so that we are wise to it:

Malachi 2:13-14 ESV And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. (14a) But you say, “Why does he not?” .....

Proverbs 30:20 ESV This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, “I have done no wrong.”

Isaiah 58:3 ESV ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no

knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

Whenever you are dealing with someone who, for example, is in just a real mess – their whole life is a disaster, and it is obviously due to their own sinful doings – and that person begins to blame shift, you must be wise. And what you will find is that sooner or later (usually sooner) that blame shifting is going to have YOU as its target. YOU are their problem. YOU are not a good enough Christian and if you were you would give them what they want. YOU are the one doing wrong. And these kind, as we see here in the Old Testament, ultimately point to God as the cause of their troubles. Its his fault. He hasn’t given them what they want.

I have a vhf marine radio on my boat and it has a gps built into it. As soon as you turn it on, it goes into search mode looking for satellites to connect with and then be enabled to know its location. The wicked are much like this gps in that they are always scanning. Scanning for something or someone to zero in on and place the blame which they should be wearing. Scanning, scanning, scanning. Realize this when you have to deal with them. They are

searching and you can hear it in their speech and see it in their mannerisms.

I cannot emphasize this point enough. Don’t be drawn into evil and end up helping evildoers by being manipulated by their blaming. We are to move on when we see people rejecting Christ like this and if we don’t move on, then we aren’t going to be doing the real work the Lord has given us to do.

### The Wicked Refuse Counsel

This final point we see is to be expected in light of all the previous:

Jeremiah 6:16-17 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. But they said, ‘**We will not walk in it.**’ (17) I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!’ But they said, ‘**We will not pay attention.**’

*We will not. We will not.*

The people of Judah had gone wrong long years before. So long had they been on the wrong road that the right



one was called “the ancient paths.”

The Lord through Jeremiah was calling on them to stop, to turn around and go back to the fork in the road where they had gone wrong. He sent them warning trumpets through His prophets that judgment was coming even now unless they took the warning to heed and repented.

Their response? *We will not. We will not.*

Many times we deal with people who are just like this. “Here is what the Lord says. Look here in His Word. This is what you must do. Turn away from the way you have been going, go back and get on the right way by following Christ.” *I will not. I will not.*

When we see these kinds of signs in people:

- Pretending to be good
- Pretending at religion
- Refusing to accept the blame
- Unthankfully using God’s blessings to fuel their sin
- Refusing to listen to the Lord’s counsel

....we know we are dealing with evil just as Jeremiah did and it is vital at those times that we heed the Lord’s words:

Jeremiah 1:17 ESV But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them.

Don’t yield to evil. Expect it to lie and blame you or someone else or even God. Expect to find it dressed up in piety and religion. *And then move on from it.* Don’t waste your energy and time being drawn in by this kind.

Matthew 10:13-14 ESV And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. (14) And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.

This is wisdom and it is the Lord’s direction to us.

