

Jeremiah 7: 1-34; “Real Joy and Gladness”, Sermon # 7 in the series –
“Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 10th, 2013,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.

Let me refresh your memory as to why we are taking this sermon journey through the book of Jeremiah; why it is that I am leading you through this part of the Word of God. These messages are given with the purpose of showing you how God faithfully teaches and leads His people to trust and obey Him in times of great apostasy and difficulty. We are living in times of great spiritual declension and yet we still have great hope and we have great promises given to us, because of Jesus Christ our Lord. We must not neglect so great a salvation, lest we find ourselves in a worse position and state than those whom we are reading about this afternoon. The foremost reason that you and I have been created and placed upon this earth is to worship God. The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it this way. What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. God, Who is the great and Holy and Perfect Being who made us, would have us to know Him. He would have us to love Him, serve Him, obey Him and to enjoy Him forever. But we as an entire race have wandered away from God like sheep seeking their own way. And we have pursued and created many false Gods to put in the place of the One true and living God. These people we have just read about were God’s chosen people. Out of all the families of the earth He had chosen them and set His love upon them. He had spoken to them and said to them, “Obey my voice”, as it says in verse 23. If they did this, then God would be their God and they would be His people. And yet they did not listen to Him but stiffened their neck. And what did they get for all their resistance to God? They only came to misery and sadness and judgment. Sin will always bring us to that place.

But God who is rich in mercy still was giving them a promise. It was found in verse 5. “For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings,” then He says in verse 7, that “He would cause them to dwell in that place, the land that he gave to their fathers forever and ever.” The truth that I bring to you now, the lesson you should take away from here today is that repentance brings real security. Repentance leads to real joy and happiness. If we will thoroughly repent of all of our sins then God will cause us to know real joy and happiness. If we do not repent we will cease to know any joy and happiness. I take this from verse 34. “Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the Bridegroom and the voice of the Bride.” “For the land shall be desolate.” Now, perhaps through Christ you have already found true joy and happiness, but if not, the question that I want to ask you this afternoon, whether you are a believer or an

unbeliever, is this – Do you hear the voice of gladness? And if not, when do you think that you will be able to hear the voice of gladness? The answer, you will find as we think about this text, is that you will hear the voice of gladness and be truly happy only when God shows you what needs to change in your heart and life.

The 1st change that must take place in your life, if you are to hear the voice of gladness is that you must stop trusting in lying words. (verses 1-12)

The lying words that were being trusted in were these – “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” (verse 4) The prophet Jeremiah was to stand in the gate of the Lord’s house (the temple) and to proclaim there, this basic message. “Hear the Word of the Lord – Those who come to worship must see the importance of repentance.” It was a lie to think that attendance on the temple worship, on all the stated days- without living a life of righteousness, is going to be protection against the Lord’s judgments. These people really thought that if the outer court, the inner court or temple, and the holy of holies were still intact, and if sacrifices were still being offered, that judgment could not come; that they were safe, that they would be delivered from any threatened judgment. They thought that they would still be able to continue in their sins. But this is not the righteous principle by which God leads His dear people along; to make them happy and useful in His service. We cannot continue in sin that grace might abound. We should never believe the lie of our own heart or the lies of other people if they try to persuade us that it is so. It is not enough, in God’s mind, and it should not be enough in ours, if we come to church, come to worship, but we do not repent of our sins; if we go after the gods of this world the rest of the week. The mentality for some Christians is this: I have put in my time, I go to church, I take communion, I am faithful in attendance, but let me live for the world, let me live for the pleasures of this world the rest of the time.

These people, who we are reading about, thought that their sins were being taken away by their ceremonial rituals, but these animal sacrifices that they were bringing were not touching their heart to bring them to repentance. This temple, which was called by God’s name, had become a den of thieves. Let us apply this truth to ourselves. Am I robbing God of the glory due His name by not cultivating holiness in the way that I think, the way that I act, and in the things that I pursue when I am not worshipping Him here? I think that each of us will be able to tell by answering this question. Do I think about God, His Word, His commandments, and consciously strive to be a righteous and holy person in private, and before my family, and with my friends? A Christian life is a consistent life. It is a constant pursuit to become what God has commanded us to be. This life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved you, and gave Himself for you. Walking with Jesus, you learn to repent of all of your sins as you see them and find them in yourself. This includes the sinful thoughts of your heart, and not simply your actions. This involves learning how to pray in secret, and learning to be patient and kind to

people around you. It is learning to go beyond just saying the words and going through the motions of what is happening at church. It is learning to worship God by obedience to His Word, by faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus obeyed God perfectly. You can only come to greater obedience by cultivating your relationship with Him. Now that you have come to know Christ, He would have you to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness, as it says in 1 Timothy 6: 11.

You see, you must not trust in the lying words of your fleshly mind saying to you; it is simply enough that you go to church. The fleshly mind; the remnants of the Old Man still within you, would have you to secretly hold on to, and coddle fleshly lusts which wage war against your soul. The Old Man within you would have you think only of yourself and nothing about the needs of people around you that you could help them with. But when you have put on the New Man then you ask the Lord every day, "Lord, what would you have me to do in obedience to your Word today?" To obey God's Word, you must meditate upon it day and night. Joshua 1: 8-10 – "This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it." "For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." The Christian life is a discipline; yes, but it is a discipline which thinks of the spiritual and physical welfare of people around you. If you are cultivating a holy life, you will be asking, "Is this person that I am looking at a Christian, or are they lost and on the high-road to hell? How can I show them Christ? How can I speak a word that will make their heart turn and consider my Savior? Oh, my friend, do not fool yourself. Do not fall short of God's glory and play at living the Christian life; live your life to God each and every day. Get on your knees and pray to God to grant you repentance if there is no evidence that you want to pursue holiness and peace with all men. Pray to God every day for a heart that is single, a heart that is true. God desires truth in the inmost being!

The 2nd change that must take place in your heart and life if you are to hear the voice of gladness is that you must answer God's call for repentance. (verses 13-29)

Verse 13 says, "And now, because you have done all these works, says the Lord, and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer," then He would bring judgment. Each person needs to repent of their own sins. "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after, new obedience." (Shorter Catechism – Question 87) Repentance is not only realizing our duty to turn from our sin, it is responding to God's call to pursue holiness. God is faithful to point out His people's sins so that they might be spared the ruin and misery that sin brings. He is pictured here in verse 13 as one who rises up early, but they did not hear. He called, but they did

not answer. God is not One simply to stand by and let sinners perish, and this is especially so with own people. God is patient, but He will not ultimately allow His people to dishonor His holy name. Let us understand that sin is a plague which breaking out will destroy those who do not know God, and damn them forever in hell if they do not repent. In God's own people, they shall not be condemned for their sins, because they are in covenant with God through Jesus Christ in the New Covenant. God calls to His dear people, when He sees them in sin, and He would have them to put a stop to their sin when it manifests itself, even in their hearts. God calls all men everywhere to repent, for as it says in Act Chapter 17, He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the man whom He has appointed. It is God's good-will to mankind that He does not want men to perish, but for all to come to repentance. This is His will of desire. He calls people to repentance through the instrumentality of the preaching of His Word, men calling men to repentance. The Lord does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. And so, through His servants He calls sinners to repentance. Some will hear and respond to that call, and some will not answer.

The Lord also calls His dear people to repentance over their heart sins; the sins which no man sees, but God does. Some of you may have become complacent and neglectful of your daily duty to respond to this call. I would say to you what the Bible says: "Awake sleeper, and rise from the dead, and let the light of Christ shine on you." (Ephesians 5: 14) Do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Remember that the Lord has shined on your darkened soul; the glory of the Lord has arisen upon you. He did not die so that you may sleep in your sins. Get up; rise up, and deal with them. One day, a few years ago, I did not get up and get out of my house quickly enough on garbage day, to place the garbage next to the street on my property. They were not going to come back and get it, since I was late in putting it out. So, I thought to myself, I will go across the street and place my garbage on my neighbor's property, and then they will pick up, because they have not been there yet. Seemed like a shameful thing to do, but that is what I did, and the garbage man took it. Sometimes we do not realize that this is what the Lord Jesus wants us to with all the sinful garbage of our minds, our hearts, and our actions. He wants us to lay it on Him. "I lay my sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God; He bears them all, and frees us from the accursed load: I bring my guilt to Jesus, to wash my crimson stains, white in His blood most precious, till not a spot remains." (Horatius Bonar, Hymn 430 in the Trinity Hymnal)

You should know that repentance is not answering a one-time call. Every day God rises up early and calls to you, if you are sensitive to His Word, and sensitive to His Spirit. He will show you, if you are spending time in prayer, what acts of obedience you can do, acts of faith, acts of self-denying love which can be performed by you by the power of His grace. Thus you can learn to strive to do His will so that His glory can be seen. The least that you can do, as a Christian, is to initiate the furtherance of holiness in your life by beginning the practice of secret

prayer, and read the Word each day in conjunction with that time of prayer. If God rises up early, then why cannot we? God told Jeremiah not to pray for this people, but the reason was because they professed to know God and yet they would respond to His call. We can pray, and we should pray for people around us until God says, “Don’t pray”. These people, some of them, were committing the sin unto death. They would say that they were true when their hearts were false, and they were unwilling to have dealings with God over their sin. God says very plainly that He will deal with all sin, and that He will even judge His people, He says in Hebrews 10: 30. The Lord Jesus said to his own close disciples in Luke 13, verse 3 – “Unless you repent, you will perish.” He says these things out of love and concern for our souls; not that He is intending to condemn any who truly belong to Him. These people in the text professed to be wise, but they became fools. They worshipped and prayed to the Queen of Heaven, it says in verse 18. They poured out drink offerings to other gods. In our day, some people who claim to be Christians pray to Mary or to the Saints, thinking that they are worshipping God aright. But those who worship false gods and pray to them, will surely be answered with God’s wrath, and will be called “the generation of His wrath”, as He says in verse 29 of our text; those who claim to be worshipping the only true and living God and yet they are doing these things. The sin unto death is when a person deliberately calls the false true and the truth falsehood, when they call the Holy Spirit striving with them demonic, and demon-inspired worship true.

If you would repent, then you must be like Abraham when God called him to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering on Mt. Moriah. He said, “Here I am.” Or Samuel, when as a young lad the Lord called him to serve Him, and he said, “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.” There may be someone here who has been coming here for years to worship, and the Lord has been calling to you: Come to Me, give Me your heart, let Me wash away your sins. But you have not come. Why should you wait a moment longer? Why should you wait until all that has been given to you of gifts and strength is wasted? Why wait, when all that Christ wants to do is to take you by the hand and lead you into true joy and happiness, because He will take away all of your sins. He will come to work in a great sense in your heart, and take away all of your boredom, because you will come to see walking with God and following Jesus Christ as the most exciting thing in life. It is the Christian life that is the most interesting life. It is the Christian life which is the most satisfying life. Godliness with contentment is great gain. With Christ as your Lord, leading you into truth, and greater obedience to His Word, you hear the voice of gladness every day in your heart.

And then finally – The 3rd change that must take place if you would hear the voice of gladness is to really believe that your greatest joy and happiness will be found in Jesus Christ. (vs. 30-34)

Spiritually speaking, this is the voice of the Bridegroom and the voice of the Bride, as is spoken of in verse 34. “Then I will cause to cease from the cities of

Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.” These people had lost this voice, but the Lord would have you who are listening to me today to hear it. This is the voice of mirth, or true and joyful happiness spiritual happiness. Is anything quite so impressively beautiful as a wedding? We were at one just yesterday. When God brought Daniel Hambly into Tami Stubbe’s life, it was truly a work demonstrating His love and His mercy, and His powerful ability to provide what they both so very much needed. Even so, dear believer, God has given you Christ. He has given you all things in Himself. He has given you His Spirit in your heart. All of the blessings in this life converge in marriage. All of the blessings of this life and the next converge in your being married to Christ. Well, I through my preaching would espouse you to Jesus this afternoon; and have you to fall in love with Him spiritually speaking, more and more. I would have you to be joined together with Him; in union with Him, so that you would be happy, and joyful, and glad forever. So come to Him in faith and repentance. Confess you have been wrong about Him if you have lived a life of unbelief. You do need Him, to be truly happy. Sin brings eternal sadness, and eternal judgment when you do not repent of your sins. True repentance brings real joy. And if you are a believer already, will you not answer His call to walk in deeper, more meaningful fellowship with Him through prayer? Remember the words of the hymn - “I will arise and go to Jesus, He will embrace me in His arms.” “In the arms of my dear Savior, O there are ten thousand charms.” “Come ye thirsty, come and welcome, God’s free bounty glorify; true belief and true repentance; every grace which brings you nigh.”