

Gut Check: Are You Grieved? – Jeremiah 2:1-13

Jer 2:1-13; We're in the middles of a series called Gut Check this summer, where we're assessing various attitudes of our heart (**Intro**)
And having asked, "Are you thankful?" last week with respect to our nation and the freedoms we enjoy, this week is the other side of the coin – *Are You Grieved?*
Focusing on our response to the *sin* we see in our nation; Including the rampant increase in godlessness, debauchery, and selfishness; It's getting worse

And Jeremiah 2 not only conveys a proper *response* to such things, but paints an accurate *picture* of them; Even in *our* day
B/c the heart of man is the same; And the similarities between our culture and theirs, unavoidable; And most important, God's view of it all hasn't changed

➤ [2:1] *The word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2] "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem [the nation], Thus says the LORD, "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. [3] Israel was holy to the LORD [set apart for him], the firstfruits of his harvest [his harvest of redemption and righteousness; they were the first]. All who ate of it [referring to the harvest; it's a word picture] incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the LORD."* [IOW those who opposed God's work of righteousness, were punished]

Those were the glory days; And God's remembering them; Including their devotion to him, and love for him, and perseverance, and holiness, and success
They started out strong

And the point is this – so did we; Just like the Israelites of old . . .

We started out strong as a nation (v1-3)

The parallels are undeniable; And you don't have to read very much of our history to see it; *They* were devoted to the Lord at first, and so were we
They loved the Lord, and so did we; *They* followed him wholeheartedly, and so did we
We even entered *a land not sown* like they did (2b), And triumphed over our enemies like they did; We started out strong

Not that every person was a *saint*; And not that we got everything *right*; Think slavery;
And women's rights; And Indian reservations
But as a whole, as a culture – most people *sought* the Lord, and most people *feared* him
And we started out strong b/c of it

Unfortunately, it didn't last; B/c just like the Israelites . . .

We digressed as a nation (v4-11)

[4] *Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. [5] Thus says the LORD: "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless? [What happened? When did I become the Wicked Witch of the West, and you, the worthless monkeys? What gives?]*

And then he continues on in v6, saying – [6] *They* [still referring to their forefathers] *did not say, 'Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?'*

They didn't seek me; After all I brought them through, I was out of sight, out of mind God says; Easy come, easy go; More similarities]

[7] *And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. You made the work of grace and way of life I instituted, into something horrible, shameful, and sinful; Sound familiar?*

And it wasn't just the people; The leaders were right there *with* them
[8] *The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds [the rulers] transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit.* [Even the leaders digressed]

[9] *"Therefore I still contend with you, declares the LORD [I still have something against you], and with your children's children I will contend [I will oppose]. [10] For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see [in the West], or send to Kedar [in the East] and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. [See if you can find another situation where people abandoned their god, in favor of lesser things] [11] Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? [Can you find an instance where a culture has abandoned their religion, even though it's false? You can't] But my people have changed their glory [they've forsaken *their* God] for that which does not profit.*

➤ They digressed; And so did we; Not that everything is bad, and not that it happened overnight; Our digression was gradual – almost imperceptible at times
Kind of like growing old – where you wake up one day and realize you've changed
Slowly but surely, the unbiblical thinking of some, quietly affected others, and seeped into our communities, colleges, and institutions

Take Harvard for example; Founded as a Christian school, it eventually digressed; So that now it's purely secular; That doesn't mean it's as bad as it could be . . .
It just means it's not what it used to be; It's no longer a bastion of truth and godliness

Or how about some of our mainline denominations? Initially, they were *stalwarts* of righteousness; *Pillars* of truth; But they too digressed
As did our government; And courts; And schools
Over time, we exchanged our allegiance to God and *his* truth, *for that which does not profit* (11b); And were it not for a few bombshells along the way . . .
Some watershed moments that marked and solidified the cultural shifts, we might not have noticed at all

Like removing prayer from schools in 1962; Or legalizing abortion in 1973; Or declaring the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional in 2013; Watershed moments
Marking years and years, even decades, of cultural digression from a biblical standard
We started out strong, but digressed

And b/c of that, we're in trouble; That's the 3rd thing I want you to see

We're in trouble as a nation (v12-13)

Look at what God says in v12-13 – [12] *Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD [IOW be grieved], [13] for my people have*

committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out [or carved out] cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

If the way God looked at the ancient Israelites is any indicator of the way he looks at us, we're in trouble; And make no mistake, it is an indicator
B/c his view of sin has never changed, and his call to follow has never waned

We're in trouble; B/c just like them, we're trying to do things on our own, and do them our own way; As opposed to trusting God and living *his* way
Or as Jeremiah says it, we've made *cisterns* for ourselves

➤ My grandparents used to have a cistern; It was in their basement
And in the old days, it was used to store rainwater for washing; But after years of leaking, it became a useless, foul-smelling breeding ground for cockroaches

Which isn't too different than the **cisterns** of Jeremiah's day; Only then, they were holes in the ground, carved out of stone; Or lined with bricks and mortar
But they still leaked; And even if it was a slow leak, the water usually became stale and rancid; Especially if an animal found its way in and polluted it; That's a cistern

And it's used here, as a metaphor, to picture ways of living that are *contrary* to God's; Contrary to his *fountain* – his fountain of *living* water; Picture it
On the one hand, you have a never ending source of life, and on the other, a stagnant pool of death; Something that satisfies in the short run . . .
But leaves you empty in the long; Something that *promises* life, but doesn't deliver
That's a cistern; And we're in trouble as a nation, b/c we have a lot of them*****

➤ Like a lifestyle of *hedonism*; Where the self-indulgent pursuit of pleasure is your sole aim; It satisfies initially, but over the long haul, leaves you empty
Or how about a *promiscuous* lifestyle? Where sex is the goal? Leaving you with nothing but short-term gain, and long-term pain
Or what about a *selfish* lifestyle, where money is the be-all-end-all?
They're broken cisterns, all of them; Things that fill quickly, leak slowly, and stink in between

And don't leave out the ungodly ways of *thinking*
Like humanism – the mindset that man has all the answers
Or atheism – the passive lack of belief in God
Or new-atheism – the faith that there is no God; Broken cisterns

Not to mention the rationale on issues like abortion, and homosexuality, and evolution, and pornography
Secular philosophies that leave you empty, and ways of living that don't deliver

And b/c of them, we're in trouble; Not just b/c we've made our *own* way, lame as it is, but b/c we've rejected God's; We've abandoned the *fountain of living waters*

Which ought to grieve us, not only out of concern for our culture, but concern for souls
B/c the end thereof, is the way of death; Reject *the fountain of living waters*, and the result is death; Which means we're in trouble; And . . .

The latest indicator is same-sex marriage

It's not the only indicator, but it's one of the latest

Signed, sealed, and delivered by the recent Supreme Court decision, to legalize it in all 50 states; Or declare it unconstitutional to prohibit it
Either way, it's a cistern, and an abandonment of the life-giving way of God

And despite the fact that we could see it coming, it should bother us, and shock us, and grieve us; As God's people, we ought to be *appalled*; And *utterly desolate*

B/c first of all . . .

1. It's contrary to God's design

And you cannot live contrary to God's design, and expect a good result

God said in **Gen 2:18** – “*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.*”

IOW someone who is both *like* him, and opposite him; That's what the Hebrew word “fit for” means; It's literally, “according to the opposite of”

Which described Eve *perfectly* in relation to Adam; She was *like* him in terms of her ability to think, and feel, and fulfill her roles . . .

But she was *opposite* him in terms of her physical fit and emotional chemistry – something another *man*, could *never* be*****

And we find a few verses later that God designed it that way, so that husbands and wives could become one flesh (Gen 2:24)

As only two people who are *like* one another, and *opposite* one another, can
Two people who are male and female; That's *God's* design for marriage

➤ And Jesus affirmed it; Saying in **Mt 19:4-5** . . .

“*Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?*” Don't you know that?

Jesus looked upon marriage the same way his Father did

And there's no mention of anything else as a legitimate, God-sanctioned expression of sexuality, anywhere in the Bible*****

Which means we're in trouble; B/c you cannot reject God's design for marriage, and expect anything good; Personally or culturally; It's a broken cistern

2. It's morally wrong

Same-sex marriage ought to grieve us, b/c it involves homosexuality, and homosexuality is morally wrong; Sinful; The Bible is clear

Like in Gen 19 and Jude 7, where it's called *wicked, immoral, unnatural*, and the cause of *great outcry to the Lord*; And Lev 18 and 20 calls it an *abomination*

And 1 Tim 1:8-11 includes people *who practice homosexuality*, as among the *lawless and disobedient*, the *ungodly and sinners*, and the *unholy and profane*

And 1 Cor 6 calls them *unrighteous*

And then there's **Rom 1:26-27**, which says that – *God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed*

with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Same-sex marriage is morally wrong, b/c it's based on *homosexuality* which is morally wrong;***** The Bible couldn't be any clearer; And it ought to grieve us

3. It's just the beginning

Think about it; If *same* sex marriage is okay, why not polyamory – *any* combination of men and women; Seriously

If you throw out the male/female part of God's design, who's to say you can't throw out the monogamous part?

Or if you don't recognize *any* design on the part of God, or *any* wisdom on the part of man over the centuries, why should there be any restrictions at *all* in marriage?

Here's how **Kevin DeYoung** put it, a pastor in Michigan

The issue is legitimate: if 3 or 13 or 30 people really love each other, why shouldn't they have a right to be married? And for that matter, why not a brother and a sister, or two sisters, or a mother and son, or father and son, or any other combination of two or more persons who love each other? Once we've accepted the logic that . . . those engaged in consensual sexual activity cannot be denied the "right" of marriage, we have opened a Pandora's box of marital permutations that cannot be shut.

Here's another way of thinking about it

If same-sex marriage is allowed on the basis of equal protection under the law, apart from any consideration of morality, then *anything* goes

In which case, we're in trouble*****

B/c you can't divorce the law from biblical morality, and expect anything other than broken cisterns – ways of living and thinking that leave you *wanting*

Which is why those in the homosexual community clamor for more and more legitimacy, and more and more attention; B/c sin *never* satisfies (**Summary**)

We started *strong*, but digressed along the way; And now we're in trouble

B/c we're drinking from broken cisterns instead of living fountains

➤ And the solution is not better arguments, or better judges, or better politicians

The solution is better churches; Comprised of men and women who care; And are grieved

People who *love* the Lord, and *know* the Word, and *speak* the truth, and *bless* their neighbor; Including those who revile them or disagree with them

The solution isn't better institutions, but better churches; Churches who refuse to cave, and refuse to cower; Churches who shine all the more, in the midst of the darkness

Prayer – Lord, we're sorry for the mess we've made, and the shame

we've brought, and the rebellion we've embraced, and the cisterns we've made; Forgive us; And forgive our land, our nation; We need you; And we need your life-giving truth