

Friday, May 19, 2017

Will Not

Jeremiah 6-7

This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.' I appointed watchmen over you and said, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But you said, 'We will not listen.'
Jeremiah 6:16-17

"I can't!" How many times have I heard that from myself or others? "I can't do that—it is too hard." In the verses today, God reveals the truth. It is not that I can't, it is that I won't. "I will not." It is interesting to see that God is reaching out to provide rest for the souls of His people. He longs for them to be set free from the pain that has come to them (and is yet to come) because they have pursued the false gods. He longs to give them rest. He tells them to look at the past—the ancient paths that revealed the ways of truth. When the people chose to walk in those paths, they found the rest God is speaking of. It is the good way. It is heralded by His prophets, but the people will not listen. They will not walk in the path of goodness. So they choose the path of pain. It is a crossroads. They have an opportunity to stand and consciously make the decision. I am reminded of the words of my Savior. *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* (Matthew 11:28-29). The call is the same today as it was through Jeremiah. Sadly, many times, the response is the same as well.

O LORD, I stand at the crossroads many times during each day. What will I choose? The paths are so clear and yet, so many times, I find myself drawn to the path of pain instead of the path of rest. Help me please with my "want to." Help me be willing to walk in the ancient good path and to listen to Your truth. Amen.

May 15 - 20, 2017

Saturday, May 20, 2017

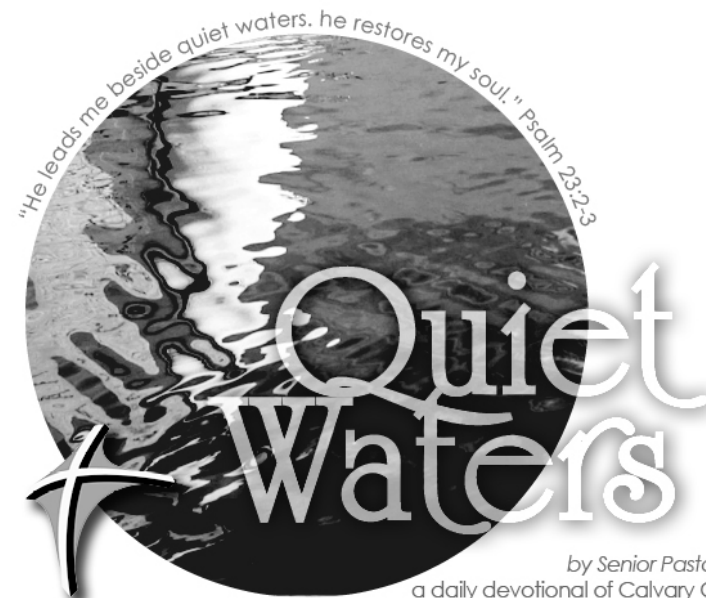
Boast

Jeremiah 8-9

This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.
Jeremiah 9:23-24

The LORD delights in kindness, justice and righteousness on the earth. These chapters of Jeremiah are pretty clear in what the LORD does not delight in. He does not delight in disobedience. He does not delight in people turning to other gods. It is because all other gods are false and lead people away from the things in which the LORD delights. It is because all other gods are designed by people. People love to create gods in their own image so that they can boast about what they have done. This is the height of pride and selfishness. Pride and selfishness stand against kindness and justice. Selfishness refuses to acknowledge truth, choosing instead to define truth as one wants. This allows a self-made person to worship his creator. When I choose to boast in what I have made of myself, I am choosing to worship myself as my creator—this is the height of arrogant pride. I can boast, however, in the truth of the love I have for the LORD. It is a love that He has given me, so that when I boast in that, I am boasting in Him. I will sing of my Redeemer! I will boast of His love for me and I will boast in my God. He is kind and just and righteous! Not only does He know me, but He has taught me to know Him—not just know about Him—but to truly know Him.

O Dear LORD, how I love You! You are my God. I boast in You and in Your love for me and for all people You have made. Help me not to focus on my accomplishments but rather to focus on Your accomplishments in and through me. I boast about You!! Amen.



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, May 15, 2017

New!

Isaiah 64-65

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.
Isaiah 65:17-19

The millennial reign of Christ on the earth is a moment that I look forward to with great anticipation. As Isaiah comes to an end, God pronounces what waits at the end of the age. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. This is not the same as that spoken of by John in Revelation, for this proclaims a time of peace and joy in a mortal existence. The new heaven and earth of Revelation speaks of those who have shed the mortal and have been clothed with the immortal and have had death swallowed up by life (1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 5). The existence Isaiah speaks of is the reign of Christ on earth following His return to earth in victory. The devil has been chained and Jesus reigns among the people of earth. Tears are a thing of the past. Old age is common and infant death is gone. I cannot fully imagine all that this is and all that it will mean for the people of God, but it causes me to have a great desire to make the forgiveness of God known to as many people as possible. The only way to have the certain hope of living in the promises of God is to understand that we live under all the promises of God—the promise of His grace and the promise of His wrath. These verses speak of a time when all are living in peace with God. It will be a wonderful day for all who enter at the hand of God.

Dear God, I know that You have a plan for eternity, that You will judge all sin, and that You will bring Your peace to bear in heaven and on earth. This is a certain hope that holds me fast. I love considering that You are sovereign and that You are patient. Your sovereignty allows me to know that Your promises will be fulfilled. Your patience moves me to go and tell as many people as possible, knowing that You want everyone to come to repentance. Amen.

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Formed and known

Isaiah 66-Jeremiah 1

The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."
Jeremiah 1:4-5

Jeremiah was given an enormous call. He was to be the voice of God during the time when Judah would be handed over to the Babylonians. He would see some terrible things and would be heralding a message that few wanted to hear. But God had made him for this very purpose. God knew Jeremiah—even before He formed Jeremiah in the womb. This is a significant verse because it speaks to the nature and character of God. God knows all things—all things. He knows what is, what was, what will be, what could be, what might have been—everything. God is also sovereign over all things. It is He who creates and forms. It is also God who calls and invites people to join with Him. What I see in this is that God has created me and formed me and given me gifts to use for Him. I also see that what I do with what He has given me is my gift to Him. In other words, God does not force me but calls me. My will submitted to Him allows me to live out my life as God has designed for me to live. I have spent many years of my life living out my design in disobedience, missing out on the best that was available for me. I also missed opportunities to be used by God. By His grace, I have come to see that I am known by God and have been formed for the work that He has prepared for me and prepared me for! God has appointed me to be His witness, proclaiming the truth of His transforming love to a world that longs to know this truth.

Dear God, how amazing to come to a place in my life where I know that I am formed and known by You and that You have a purpose for my life. May I always live my life according to the design that You have for me! Shape me and use me Lord. I am Yours. Amen.

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

Forsaken

Jeremiah 2-3

But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.
Jeremiah 2:11b,13

Forsaken is not a word we use very often. Synonyms include deserted and abandoned. As I read Jeremiah 2 & 3, I hear the heart of God as He expresses how He feels about His people rejecting Him—forsaken, abandoned, deserted. Several verses in these chapters cause me to stop and ask myself very hard questions. God is the lover of my soul. He loves His people deeply and passionately. He always has His best for people in His heart and in His mind. He loves His people for exactly who they are, not in spite of who they are. He does not manipulate or coerce. He does not take advantage nor does He desire to hurt His people. Satan is the opposite. He absolutely hates humans. He will use them to hurt the heart of God every chance he gets. He will coerce them to pursue him instead of God—that is the prostitution that is spoken of in these verses. He manipulates thoughts. He will try to use my selfish nature to hurt everyone close to me and then rejoice as he watches how that wounds me in the process (2:25). My selfish nature will also choose the things that will hurt me the most. Considering only my perceived need keeps me from having my actual needs fulfilled. I cannot meet my own needs—only God can (2:13). As God talks to His people Israel, I get a glimpse as to how He views my efforts to find satisfaction apart from Him.

The Lover of my soul longs to fold me in His arms so I can feel His protection and guidance. That requires that I genuinely seek Him above all other gods (that are really not gods at all, 2:11). Am I seeking God with all my heart? Am I engaged in an intimate relationship with the Lover of my soul or am I involved in an adulterous relationship with a false god (2:20)? Tough question. Tougher answer.

Dear God, I admit that I have run after other gods. I have forsaken You. I have been lured away and have sold myself to false lovers. I have forsaken You and I have dug cisterns for myself. Just as Israel turned from You, so have I. Please forgive me. I have been unfaithful. Please let me hear Your heart as I read Jeremiah. Let me hear Your call to a people that You love and in that let me hear You calling me as well. Look at my heart Lord! See that I desire You above all others! Find me faithful to You alone. Amen.

Thursday, May 18, 2017

My Anguish

Jeremiah 4-5

Oh, my anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain. Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent. For I have heard the sound of the trumpet; I have heard the battle cry.
Jeremiah 4:19

Here is the heart of Jeremiah, who has been described as the weeping prophet. While Jeremiah was very bold with the public proclamation of the prophecy that he was given to share, in private he was brokenhearted before God. In 4:19-31, Jeremiah expresses his own anguish as he considers the implications of what he is writing. He knew why the judgment was coming. God had revealed it to him. The people were foolish, senseless children, skilled in doing evil (4:22). God was going to bring judgment in His fierce anger (4:26). This broke the prophet's heart. If only the people would listen. If only the people would return to their first Love. Jeremiah knew what was coming, but he also knew that it could be avoided if the people would repent. But then, he also knew they would not. The hearts of this people were given away—never to return—so the judgment must come. Am I in anguish? I know the prophecy that has been spoken against those who do not believe in God. I know the devastation that is to come when God judges rightly this age. Does this bring anguish to my heart? Does my heart ache because the heart of God aches as He watches His creation turn their backs on His love? Does my heart ache for the people who will be judged because they have not heard? Am I doing all I can to ensure that the truth of God is known? If I am truthful, I see that I am all too often distracted by my needs and my search for temporary pleasure (false gods). I am content (rebelliously) resting in God's grace instead of being motivated to the mission given to me to go and make disciples. I am too easily distracted to writhe in pain and experience this type of anguish.

O LORD, forgive my apathy. I have been distracted and have not felt the pain of Your heart. I sing the song that asks that You would have my heart break for what breaks Yours, but at the end of the day, I really don't grasp it the way that I want to. May I be in anguish over the certain fate of those who are lost. May I see them through Your eyes and may I reach out to them with Your truth and Your love. Amen.