

Friday, April 26, 2019

Boast

Jeremiah 20-21

"Furthermore, tell the people, 'This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death. Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; he will escape with his life. I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the LORD. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.'

Jeremiah 21:8-10

King Zedekiah calls for Jeremiah to inquire of the LORD to see if God will save Jerusalem and will perform the wonders He has in the past. Nebuchadnezzar is attacking. The prophecy that Jeremiah has been bringing is starting to come true. But the king is not really ready to listen. He is looking to use God for his own advantage. It does not seem to occur to the king that he would need to repent intentionally and lead his people into repentance in order for God to even consider "performing" for him. He is looking for God to perform (21:2). Jeremiah answers with the word of the LORD. The things contained within this answer are unsettling. God, who through Moses told the people that He was setting before them life and death now says the same thing. However, in this situation, life is not to be found in choosing obedience. Rather life is to be found in surrender to the enemy. Jeremiah is calling for treason.

Jeremiah 29:11 is often quoted and held strongly as a promise of God. He declares that He has "plans to prosper and not to harm." Here we read that the LORD declares that He has determined to do the city harm—not good. God must be understood in both of these promises. God's wrath will pour out in perfect justice against sin. Sin must be judged and must be judged harshly. God does not wink at sin. He judges it righteously. So, I must understand that God does have plans to prosper and not to harm those who are given to Him. But there is also judgment that will most certainly fall on those who are not. God is loving and God is holy. God is just and God is kind. God is righteous.

O LORD, these verses are not easy for me to read. In these verses I read Your righteous anger against the sin that has drawn Your chosen nation away from You. Your judgment is sure. That is not a popular message. It wasn't when Jeremiah spoke it and it isn't today. People are not comfortable with You when You speak like this, LORD. They want You to perform for them. I guess, if I am honest, many times I do as well. LORD, I want to grieve for those who do not know You and who are destined for Your righteous judgment against their sin. Please move in my heart to be broadly and boldly proclaiming Your truth and Your gospel. Amen.

Saturday, April 27, 2019

Coming

Jeremiah 22-23

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. Jeremiah 23:5-6

Jeremiah prophesies of a coming day when the Messiah will appear. This "Branch" is none other than the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man—Jesus of Nazareth. He is the promised King that will reign over a reunited kingdom. The tribes of Judah and Israel will once again be united. This is the promise that the Jews of Jesus' day looked to have fulfilled. They could not see that the plan of God would be revealed in two advents of the Christ. There is a day yet coming when Jesus will return to reign on earth. The nation of Israel will be reunited. This reuniting will be so significant that the miraculous return from Egypt will pale in comparison. In the midst of the prophecies that Jeremiah utters—most of which bring weeping and mourning—God reveals that there is still a plan for the remnant He will preserve. He plans to shepherd them and tend to them so that they will not fear or be lost. My King Jesus is also this Great Shepherd. I think of John 10 and thank God that I am one who hears the voice of this Shepherd who will, in a day yet coming, reign on earth as King.

Dear God, how I long for the day when Jesus the Messiah comes and reigns over the restored Israel. I long for that day of peace. I realize that when I pray for the peace of Israel, as David did in Psalm 122, I am in essence praying for that day yet coming. There may be moments of peace in this age, but the age to come will bring the real peace that we all long for. Even so Lord Jesus, quickly come. Amen.

April 22 - 27, 2019



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

Monday, April 22, 2019

How?

Jeremiah 12-13

"If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan? Your brothers, your own family—even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you."
Jeremiah 12:5-6

How will Jeremiah grow in his faith? In this chapter, he presents his case to the LORD and asks for action (12:3). God answers quite differently than how Jeremiah had anticipated. God was focused on helping His servant grow. Jeremiah "wanted out" of the situation he was in. God wanted to reveal that Jeremiah was in the situation so that he could be used by God. Faith needs to grow in the life of a servant of God. I have heard it said that nothing grows on the mountaintops. Things grow in the valleys. It is in the valleys of life—the times when His servants feel the greatest trials—that faith in God grows. Jeremiah will be facing even greater trials. God knows this—Jeremiah is yet unaware. He thinks this part has been hard, but there is even harder to come and Jeremiah must be strong enough in the faith to handle the harder. He must be ready to compete with horses!!

I can really learn from this. I wonder if God may be asking me the same thing. How can I expect to stand strong in the battles coming that are yet unseen if all I am doing is asking God to make me more comfortable now? I must be ready to compete with horses and manage in the thickets of life. I must realize that, as a servant of God, I am placed where He wills and empowered by Him to be there!

Dear God, forgive me for the times I want only to be comfortable, in the way that I have defined. Remind me often that You have saved me and called me for far more than this. I can compete with whatever comes into my life as my faith in You and in Your purpose for my life strengthens me. Amen.

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

Repent

Jeremiah 14-15

Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them."
Jeremiah 15:19

Jeremiah was told to repent. He had been listening to the complaints of the people and was starting to think along the same lines as them. He accused God of being deceptive (15:18). Being around the stubborn people and their lying false prophets had worn on Jeremiah and he presented his case to God. He loved God and so he took feelings and poured out his heart to the Lord in honesty instead of covering it up. God understands and knows this dear prophet's heart and responds with a call to change the direction of his thinking. After the call to repent, God then restores the call for Jeremiah, reminding him of the great plans of speaking words that are worthy as the spokesman of God.

It is so easy to get swept up into untrue thoughts about God if I surround myself with people who are speaking worthless words. I must not turn to people for my understanding and wisdom, I must turn to the LORD. I must earnestly repent of the times I slip into looking for popularity instead of standing firm in the truth of God. In some ways, it seems this is getting harder, as so many times standing for the Lord's truth is standing against the cultural narrative that rejects His love. I need great boldness and security in my relationship with the God who loves me and has called me to stand and speak for Him!

Dear God, I need Your strength to stand boldly for You. I know that I have not always stood firm. I have turned to people instead of You. Please move in my life so that I can always be one that people will turn to so that they can know Your truth. Keep me rooted in You. Amen.

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

Remember

Jeremiah 16-17

"Judah's sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars. Even their children remember their altars and Asherah poles beside the spreading trees and on the high hills."
Jeremiah 17:1-2

I read these verses in Jeremiah and I hear God making the sin of the people very clear. They have not only sinned to such a degree that the mark was indelibly engraved upon their own hearts, they have also caused the sin of idolatry to be what their children remember. This is heartbreaking on many levels. When God rescued His people from Egypt so they could be free to worship Him, it was so that they could know Him in their hearts and teach the love of the one true God to their children (Deuteronomy 4:9; 11:18-19). They have bought in completely to the Canaan worship of gods—to the point where they put God Almighty next to the other gods, degrading Him in the process. They have done this in such a way that the hearts of their children do not know the difference and do not know how to love God—or even why they should. They have shaped their children's hearts to remember *worshipping idols* as the correct way to live.

God cannot be added to other gods. God will not share His glory. He cannot and will not stand for this type of sin. I must learn from this. I must remember that my heart influences the hearts of those who are watching me—my children, grandchildren, and people that I am called to lead. I need a pure heart that is devoted to the LORD alone.

O LORD, please help that my children would not remember all the times that I worshiped other gods in my heart. I am so grateful that You have forgiven me, but I am left with the earnest prayer that You will continue to shape their hearts and the hearts of others who saw me at that time. May they now see how You have changed my heart to be a heart that longs to pursue You alone and may that cause them to have new memories of Your love and power. Amen.

Thursday, April 25, 2019

Shaping

Jeremiah 18-19

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD; "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.
Jeremiah 18:1-4

God is sovereign. He is over everything and controls everything. He is the Potter and everything else is clay in His hands. He shapes and forms as He sees fit. The clay is shaped by the potter—the potter is not shaped by the clay. The illustration is clear. Jeremiah goes and watches the potter and God reveals more about Himself. God can choose to relent. Charles Feinberg states *that for God to relent does not mean that He changes His mind. Rather, God relenting is His consistent response according to His changeless nature to a change in conduct.*

The potter's house reveals to me that God is shaping me for His purposes as it seems best to Him. This is significant. Too many times I can be like the clay that jumps up and accuses the potter of not shaping me in the way I think is best (Isaiah 45:9). It is also significant as it allows me to trust completely that God is using everything that happens in my life to shape me according to His plan. I am constantly being formed by a loving God into the masterpiece that He has determined I should be. Nothing comes into my life by chance. Nothing that comes into my life will allow me to be removed from His shaping touch or His careful attention.

O LORD, thank You for shaping me! I am amazed as I consider that the same care You are taking with me You take with every person You have ever created! You are an amazing God and I fold myself into the palm of Your hand so that You can find me malleable and ready to be shaped by You! Amen.