

Friday, May 3, 2019

Branch

Jeremiah 32-33

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."

Jeremiah 33:14-16

The Messiah will reign on earth. There is yet to come a day when the Messiah will appear for the second time and will sit on the throne of David. The two advents of the Christ were unexpected by those who were waiting for the Messiah to appear. Looking back and looking into Scripture, one can see the mystery unfold. It is apparent that Jesus is the Messiah, but that His first appearing was to bring the good news of the new covenant to all people. There will come a day when He will come back in great power and will sit on His throne. The promise will be fulfilled. I look forward with great anticipation to that day when Jesus comes again. As I wait for the day He rules on earth, I live allowing Him to rule my life. As each person who is a child of God does this, He is revealed and many will come to know our great and glorious King.

Ah, Sovereign LORD, You are indeed over all there is. You are majestic and holy and You are working out the plan of redemption that was put in place in eternity past. I know there will come a day when King Jesus will reign on earth. It will be a time of great peace and joy as we live in Your presence. I bend my knee to my King now, grateful for His love for me and for His reign in my life. Amen.

April 29 - May 4, 2019

Saturday, May 4, 2019

Lesson

Jeremiah 34-35

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, 'Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?' declares the LORD. 'Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me.'"

Jeremiah 35:12-14

The Recabites were a small separatist clan that was related to Moses' father-in-law (Judges 1:16). They were nomadic in nature because of a command that one of their forefathers had placed on them. In obedience to the command, they did not drink any wine, nor build houses, nor plant vineyards. For more than 200 years, they had been obedient as a group of people to the rule passed down by one man. It was a testimony of obedience that God would use to challenge the disobedience of His people. The commands of the Lord had been received by Israel repeatedly. Time and again, they had covenanted to keep them—time and again, they did not. The Recabite obedience was a lesson for the people of Israel and for me today. Their obedience was fueled by the community of the clan. They did not want to dishonor the command that held them separate from all the other people. The lesson for the Israelites—and for me—is clear. I am part of a people of God. A chosen people, according to 1 Peter. Just as God has chosen the Israelites as a people for Himself, so He has chosen the Church as a people called out from among all others to live as a separatist clan, as He continues to work out His redemptive plan. This world is not my home. I need not focus too much effort in being comfortable here. There is a balance I must maintain. Also, I must, as one of the called out ones, live in obedience according to the covenant I made with God when I repented of my sin and turned to Him.

Dear God, thank You for this example of a clan that remained obedient to just the command of a man. How can I be less focused on obedience to Your gracious guiding commands? May I learn to love Your commands and may I be faithful to keep them in community with all those who have been called out from this world. Amen.



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

Monday, April 29, 2019

Listened

Jeremiah 24-25

And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. They said, "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever. Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not provoke me to anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you." "But you did not listen to me," declares the LORD, "and you have provoked me with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves."
Jeremiah 25:4-7

For twenty-three years, Jeremiah has been telling the kings and the people that judgment is coming. They have not listened. They have chosen not to pay attention to the word of the LORD. This is the midpoint of Jeremiah's service as a prophet. I try to imagine having spoken this message of judgment for twenty-three years with no response. I try to imagine knowing what God is saying and proclaiming that truth and finding that people simply refuse to listen. The cup of God's wrath will be poured out on all those who do not listen to His words and His truth. It begins with His chosen people and extends to the Gentiles. While God chooses to use Nebuchadnezzar as His servant, God will yet judge the Gentile king as well. The earthly kingdom will not withstand the wrath which will be poured out upon disobedience. Maybe I can relate to Jeremiah in some ways. I proclaim the truth of the LORD. Jesus is the promised Messiah. Salvation is possible in Him alone. Sin earns the wrath of God and the cup of wrath will be poured out on all who do not listen and who do not believe. Eternal death awaits all who do not listen to the Word of the Lord. The culture I live in does not listen or pay attention to the Lord. They are asking for His cup of wrath to be poured out upon them by provoking the LORD. They are bringing harm upon themselves. It has been prophesied and it will be done. Like Jeremiah, I continue to give the warning, speaking the truth of God—even though many will not listen.

Dear God, give me the boldness and the passion of Jeremiah. Also, please, give me His heart for the lost. Your Word is so clear as to what awaits those who refuse You. Speak Your truth through me—help people hear Your truth. Amen.

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

Serve

Jeremiah 26-27

Then I said to the priests and all these people, "This is what the LORD says: Do not listen to the prophets who say, 'Very soon now the articles from the LORD'S house will be brought back from Babylon.' They are prophesying lies to you. Do not listen to them. Serve the king of Babylon, and you will live. Why should this city become a ruin?"
Jeremiah 27:16-17

God has determined that Nebuchadnezzar will be His servant. Because of this, God has determined that all nations must serve the king of Babylon. This is significant. No wonder the people were listening to the lying prophets. Jeremiah was telling them that God was commanding them to serve the king of Babylon. The lying prophets were telling them that the articles that had been taken from the temple would soon be returned and so the people would need to fight against Babylon. Not true. God was meting out justice and the agent of justice is the king of Babylon. Relenting was no longer an option. The plan had been set in motion and the Jews would be in exile for seventy years. In fact, the articles of the temple that had been taken away were not coming back soon. In addition, God saw to it that the rest of the articles of the temple were taken away. Yet, at the right time, God would bring them back. It would be when He brought His people back. God is in control, even using the rulers of this world, who think they are in control. When I choose to submit to the authorities that have been placed over me, I am allowing myself to conform to the plan of God. It is He who has determined where and when I should live (Acts 17:26) and it is He who puts authority in place (Romans 13:1). This does not mean that I do not serve God—Daniel will make this clear. He will serve the king and God—but God first.

Dear God, help me to serve those who are in authority over me. The role of a servant does not come easily to me. I would prefer to be in control. Help me see how You are leading and in control, even of those who are in authority over me and that, as I serve them, I am serving You. Help me be wise to know when I should stand up for You, even as I serve. Amen.

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

Plans

Jeremiah 28-29

This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."
Jeremiah 29:10-13

The letter that Jeremiah sent to the exiles included these verses that have become some of the most quoted in all Scripture. Context is important. This letter is being written to people in exile and it is basically telling them to settle down because they will be in exile for seventy years. In other words, they would not be going home. Yet in the letter, Jeremiah reminds them that God is true to His promises. He has a plan and He is working out that plan. In our cultural setting, individualism causes us to read these verses incorrectly. The "you" is not a promise to an individual; rather it is a promise to a people—His chosen people. There will come a time when they will call upon the LORD and He will hear them (consider Daniel 9). He will listen and the people will find Him because they will seek Him with all their heart. I must be careful not to apply these verses to myself individually without carefully considering the truth these verses hold. God is working out His eternal plan of redemption. The thread of this redemptive narrative winds all through Scripture. These verses are a covenant-keeping God stating that His promise to His people remains. The power of these verses for me is that the Church has been grafted in to these promises and God continues to work out His plan for redemption. God has made gracious promises and at just the right time they will find fulfillment. I must not reduce the power of these verses to mean anything less.

O LORD, I am so tempted to have everything I read be all about me and my perceived needs and wants. This causes me to see powerful promises like the ones I am looking at today in selfish ways. Please forgive me. Remind me often that I am part of the redemptive plan You have been unfolding throughout history. Remind me that I can rest upon Your eternal gracious promise—that the ultimate plans You have for me are to prosper and take hold of hope in Your presence! Amen.

Thursday, May 2, 2019

New Covenant

Jeremiah 30-31

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. "This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD Almighty is his name: "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me."
Jeremiah 31:31, 35-36

There is a new covenant. It is the covenant that Jesus speaks of when He takes Passover with His disciples (Luke 22:20). It is the new covenant in His blood. The new covenant is made to the people of the promise—the nation of Israel. One cannot read these chapters without understanding that the covenants that God made with the nation still stand. The new is the continuing unfolding of the redemptive plan of God that is woven throughout all of Scripture. When Jesus pronounced that it was His blood that would redeem people, it began with the Jew and was extended to the Gentile. God has a plan for His people—first, for His nation Israel and then, for His Church. I love that the new covenant is available to the entire world. God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. This new covenant allows me to not just know about God, but to truly know God (Jeremiah 31:34). Jesus came to be the visible representation of God. *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father* (John 14:9). It is possible for me to know God because of the new covenant. Because of the new covenant, God chooses to indwell the lives of every believer so that they can know Him at the very core of who they are (John 14:23). He lives in me. I know Him. I am grateful.

O LORD, You know me and You have allowed a way for me to know You. Thank You that You are a God who keeps every promise. Thank You for the new covenant given to Your people and thank You for opening the covenant to all people. You are truly a gracious God. Thank You for coming to live in me. I do not know what I would do without You in my life. Amen.