

Friday, May 17, 2019

Unless

Lamentations 4-5

You, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation. Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long? Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.

Lamentations 5:19-22

In the midst of pain and lament, the heart that seeks the Lord pours out to Him. Even though the babies of the next generation had been eaten to avoid starvation (4:10), God's throne endures. I remember that the language of lament is not a language of hopelessness; it is a cry for hope to come in the midst of deep pain. It is a language that resolves, based on the promises, the nature, and the character of God. At the end of this book of lament, Jeremiah remembers that God is sovereign and that He does indeed forgive those who repent and are restored by Him. This book of lamentations is read each year by the Jewish people on the date the city was set ablaze. As I read the last phrase, I consider the language of lament. I know this type of pain. I know this type of lament. I know the pain that brings these types of words and I know the nature and character of God that allows these thoughts to resolve. I also know the God who allows me to come into His presence with these thoughts that need to be resolved. He does not turn me away. He listens to the heart behind the words and, as He listens, He restores.

Dear Father, thank You that You are Father. You are a Father who listens—the God who hears me. You incline Your ear to me and hear not just my words, but my heart behind the words—even when I do not know that heart myself. Amen.

May 13 - 18, 2019

Saturday, May 18, 2019

Priest

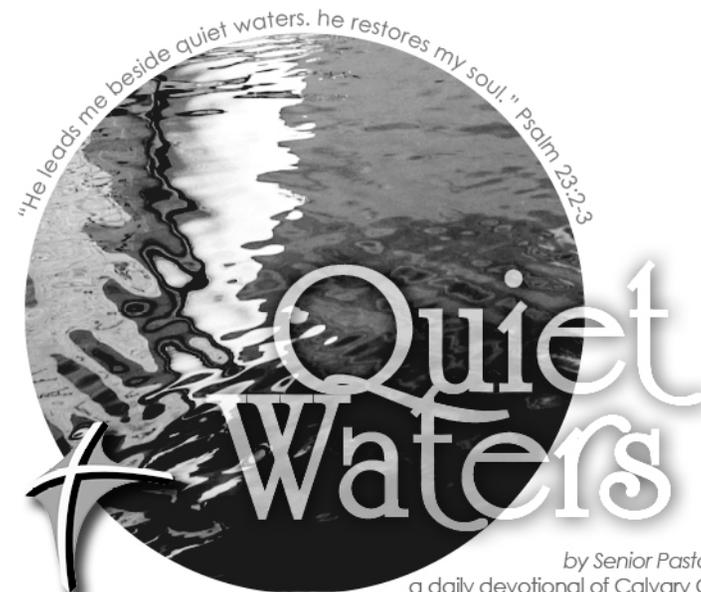
Ezekiel 1-2

In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin—the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. There the hand of the LORD was upon him.

Ezekiel 1:1-3

What role is there for a priest who is in exile? That is what Ezekiel is about to find out. The date is July 31, 593 B.C. This is the day the LORD will give Ezekiel his first vision. "There the hand of the LORD was upon him." This is the sentence that will be used no less than 50 times in this book as Ezekiel proclaims the message of God. As a priest, he would have been involved in temple worship. This would not be possible in exile. The temple has not yet been destroyed, but Ezekiel has no access to the temple. Another of his roles as priest would be to intercede for the people. That is what he was doing. Apparently, the exiles in Babylon would gather at this place to pray. As Ezekiel was interceding, the LORD appeared in great magnificence. The book of Ezekiel will focus greatly on the majesty and sovereignty of God, perhaps in great part because of the way God first made Himself known to Ezekiel. I imagine it would be very hard to have the vision described in the first chapter and not have your view of God forever changed—even for someone such as Ezekiel, who already served the LORD. What role is there for a priest in exile? Prophet. God will call this faithful priest to be a prophet. The LORD will speak through this faithful servant. He will declare that Jerusalem will fall. He will declare that there will be restoration. In the very first verse, I can learn from Ezekiel. He seeks God in the midst of uncertain circumstances. He joins with others in prayer. In Christ, I am a part of the royal priesthood of believers. I too must seek the LORD in prayer in all circumstances.

Dear God, thank You for the example of this man of faith. Thank You for revealing Yourself to him and then for his faithfulness to prophesy Your truth. As I prepare to read this book of Ezekiel, prepare my heart to hear what You have to teach me. Amen.



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

Monday, May 13, 2019

Wail

Jeremiah 48-49

"We have heard of Moab's pride—her overweening pride and conceit, her pride and arrogance and the haughtiness of her heart. I know her insolence but it is futile," declares the LORD, "and her boasts accomplish nothing. Therefore I wail over Moab, for all Moab I cry out, I moan for the men of Kir Hareseth.

Jeremiah 48:29-31

As Jeremiah prophesies against the nations, it is clear that they have earned the punishment they receive. Each of these nations has rebelled against God. Moab has been a nation that has been filled with pride—so much so that it seems to have been their identifying characteristic. "We have heard of Moab's pride." Pride is standing in defiance of God. Of course, God opposes the proud. Any pride must be punished. It is what Moab deserves and yet, once again, I see that Jeremiah weeps. Actually, he wails and moans for what he knows will happen to this nation. This is not common. It is far more common to cast judgment and mete out punishment without emotion—at least without love and empathy. If there are others that deserve judgment more than me, I can avoid considering what I am due. Again I am reminded that each person is created by God and is special because of that design. When I see people who have not yet seen the love of God demonstrated through Jesus, I must wail and moan, knowing the fate that awaits them.

Dear God, I stay busy so that I do not have to have these thoughts on the front of my mind. I spend time in small talk and temporary things so that I can avoid thinking of the fate that awaits those who do not know You. If I saw what Jeremiah saw, I know that I would weep as he wept. Please Father, let me see the people of the world as You do—as sheep being harassed in need of their Shepherd. Amen.

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Redeemed

Jeremiah 50-51

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah as well. All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go. Yet their Redeemer is strong; the LORD Almighty is his name. He will vigorously defend their cause so that he may bring rest to their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon.

Jeremiah 50:33-34

"Babylon must fall because of Israel's slain... "

Jeremiah 51:49

The prophecy against Babylon is severe—and lengthy. They will not escape judgment. Of all the nations that receive the prophecies, including Israel and Judah, Babylon receives the harshest. Babylon is against Jerusalem. Babylon must fall and the people of God must be redeemed. There is a Redeemer. This Redeemer is ADONAI-Tzva'ot—The LORD of Hosts—the God of armies. This is not what He does—it is who He is. It is His name. Babylon must fall. There is no standing against the LORD of Hosts. He is sovereign over all armies. They move at His command, even those who do not recognize Him as ADONAI. Every knee will bow in the future to the King of kings, but I must never forget that even though it may appear as though the forces against God are strong, in comparison to God they are most definitely not. God vigorously defends the cause of those who belong to Him. He redeems so that He may bring rest (Hebrews 4). Peace with God brings the rest that I was designed for. I catch a glimpse here because I have been redeemed—but wait patiently for the complete fulfillment.

Dear Redeemer, thank You for rescuing me. Thank You for the truth that just as You have vigorously defended the cause of Your chosen ones, so You still do to this day. Truly, You are the LORD of Hosts. I know that You are sovereign over armies and that You will bring Your rest. Amen.

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

Shocking

Jeremiah 52-Lamentations 1

How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave. Lamentations 1:1

It is shocking to think that Jerusalem was destroyed. It is shocking to think that the temple has been burned. It is shocking to think that the City of God has been destroyed. Truthfully, we do not have any way of grasping just how shocking this was. All the confidence of the people had been placed in the belief that God would never allow this destruction to happen because it was the city where He dwelt and the temple in which He was worshiped. What they missed is that God would rather have His temple burned and His city destroyed than to have His name disgraced by the wickedness of His people. His name will be great in all the earth. God will not allow His name to be disgraced. Thus came the shocking destruction of the city. People could not believe it happened! Americans were shocked when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Americans were shocked when the Twin Towers were brought down. These pale in comparison to the absolute shock that would have come to the Jews. God had abandoned the temple and the city. As long as the temple and the city stood, it meant that God was with them (or so they thought). This is more than the devastation of some buildings. It shakes the people to the core. I must remember that I do not control God. He is not obligated to act in the way that I have prescribed and in the manner that I have determined. He does not have to bless what I have determined He needs to bless. If His name is being disgraced, He will take action.

O LORD, it is shocking to think that You would leave Your city deserted. It teaches me an important lesson. May I not disgrace Your name. May we as the Church not be a people that disgrace Your name. May we, rather, proclaim Your name as great in all the world and may Your people stand as a declaration of all that Your name stands for. Amen

Thursday, May 16, 2019

Wait Quietly

Lamentations 2-3

Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Lamentations 3:22-26

These verses are probably among the most familiar in the Bible and they have brought great comfort and hope to many people. It is as they are read in context that real power comes to these verses. In the midst of pain and hopelessness beyond what can be imagined, Jeremiah declares that he will hope. By all indications, the covenants are gone. The promise of God was that there would always be a king on the throne of David. The sacrifices could not be offered apart from the temple—so, what of the covenant with Moses? The promises appear to have been broken, but can God break His promises? Of course not. Jeremiah knows this. He may not understand how, but he is certain that God will bring the salvation he has promised. He knows that God is faithful and that God's compassions never fail. He knows that God is good to those who wait on Him. He knows that God will be found by those who seek Him. He determines, because of all he knows to be true—even in the midst of absolute and total chaos—that it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. I do not do all that well with the "silently" part. I have no choice but to wait—but to rest as I wait is a much different thought. God is my portion. He is enough for me. I can wait.

O LORD, You know how I long for these verses to remind me that I can wait for You to move. So often I run ahead of You and look back to wonder why You are not keeping up. It is then that I realize that I have been moving too fast. You are up to something; therefore, I will wait for You. Amen.