

Friday, May 31, 2019

Example

Ezekiel 23-24

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears. Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet; do not cover the lower part of your face or eat the customary food of mourners."
Ezekiel 24:15-17

January 15, 588 B.C. is the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. The prophet will be asked to make a huge sacrifice. Ezekiel's wife was the delight of his eyes. In all the years of hardship, his wife had been a joy for him. Now he would lose her. God would take her away and he was not to mourn. This would show the Israelites what would happen when the delight of their eyes was taken away. He was speaking of the temple. It was the temple that was the object of their affection—the delight of their eyes—that in which they took pride. God was about to take it away and they were not to mourn because they had every opportunity to avoid it happening. This ends a major section of Ezekiel's book. The prophesy against Jerusalem is finished. His message will now change. Am I ready to be used by God in this way? I pray that God finds me ready to be used for Him in whatever way He deems best. I long to be an example of a man who responds as my King commands. May He find me faithful by His grace and in His strength.

Dear God, I don't know if I could do what You asked Ezekiel to do! I want to be faithful to You. I want You to know that You can trust me with whatever You need of me, but I need You to be my strength. Please LORD, equip me so that You can find me faithful. Amen.

Saturday, June 1 2019

Future

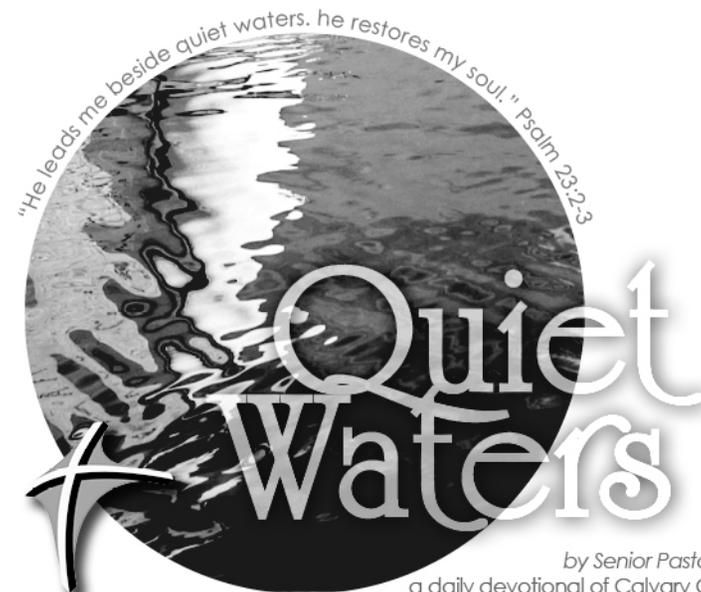
Ezekiel 25-26

They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock.
Ezekiel 26:4

With the prophecy against Israel finished, Ezekiel moves to the prophecy against the nations, as God judges them for the way they responded to His chosen people. In this, God shows that even when His chosen nation rebels—and even when He uses other nations to bring discipline upon His people—all nations will still be judged on how they respond to the people of the promise. Today we consider the destruction of Tyre. This prophecy was written approximately 586 B. C. The destruction that is spoken of does not fully happen until Alexander the Great invades the city in 322 B. C. Tyre consisted of two cities—one on the mainland and another island city about ½ mile off the coast. Both were well fortified. Nebuchadnezzar attempted to defeat the island city but was unable, even though he captured the mainland city. Alexander came and scraped the city, taking the buildings and trees and debris and repurposing them to make a causeway 300 yards wide leading all the way to the island city. This allowed him to capture the city. That causeway is now an isthmus as a result of sand filling it in. The prophecy God spoke through Ezekiel had come true. Tyre was a bare rock. It is hard for me to release the future to God. I can worry over tomorrow and wonder what lies in store. I must remember that God is sovereign over every nation and every event—even down to the details. I can trust the future because I know who holds the future.

Dear God, I am grateful for this reminder that You are not surprised. You hold tomorrow in Your hand. Forgive me for the times I fret. Allow me to bring my anxieties of the future to You. I worry about what the world will be like for my children and my grandchildren. I need to remember this assurance. Thank You. Amen.

May 27 - June 1, 2019



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

Monday, May 27, 2019

Allegory

Ezekiel 15-16

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant. Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both those who are older than you and those who are younger. I will give them to you as daughters, but not on the basis of my covenant with you. So I will establish my covenant with you, and you will know that I am the LORD. Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Sovereign LORD.” Ezekiel 16:59-63

Ezekiel chapter 16 captures the history of Jerusalem from God’s perspective. It is heartbreaking to read. I read the words of unrequited love from the one who was rejected. The allegory that is presented gives a clear picture of why the judgment must come upon the people of the promise. The covenant has been broken from their side—repeatedly. They have rejected the One who loves them and have repeatedly turned away. I ache for the heart of God as I read this chapter. I yearn for His people to know His love. Even today, His people reject His love and His promise. Yet, God loves. It is why He disciplines. The New Covenant that will be found in the atonement provided through Jesus Christ will allow for restoration. God Himself will make atonement. As I read this allegory and I think of the Church today, I see the same pain in God’s heart. His bride is not keeping herself pure. All too often, she runs after other lovers. If only we could know this heart of God. If only we could constantly remember this love. If only I could remember this love every moment and keep my heart pure, resisting the tempter’s snare.

Dear God, forgive me and Your people for our sins. Forgive me and Your bride for the way that we constantly run to other hurtful lovers. Forgive me and Your people for turning our backs on Your love and causing You pain. Forgive our actions that demand Your justice. Forgive me and Your people for continuing in these practices even though we know better. Thank You for the atonement and for the New Covenant. May it change my life and heart. Amen.

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

Death

Ezekiel 17-18

The word of the LORD came to me: “What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.”

For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

Ezekiel 18:1-3, 32

The nation of Israel had convinced themselves that they were being judged because of the sins of their fathers and that there was nothing they could do to avoid the judgment that was to come. In this chapter, God makes it clear that each person is judged for their own actions. What Israel missed was that the reason the judgment could not be avoided is because they would not repent. God was not taking pleasure in this judgment. God does not take pleasure in the death of anyone. I read 18:23 and I consider that it is the choice of people to die—not God. What I see is that people have chosen death by their sin. God’s desire is that they would repent and live. It is this that pleases Him. How many of the people that I meet each day have chosen death over life? Israel could have repented, but they did not. Israel could have lived but chose death. Israel chose death when repentance could have brought life. Repentance is a turning from one’s own way to God’s way. It is a complete turning of thoughts and heart. I can be very certain that each person I meet is special to God and that His pleasure is not found in their misery. It is found in their repentance. He takes great pleasure in people recognizing that they are being judged for their own actions and turning from those actions and finding their life in Christ.

Dear God, help me see people the way that You do. Help me not take pleasure in the death that some people are choosing to live in. Rather, let me be a channel of Your life-giving message to them! Amen.

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

Inquire

Ezekiel 19-20

In the seventh year, in the fifth month on the tenth day, some of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and they sat down in front of me. Then the word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Have you come to inquire of me? As surely as I live, I will not let you inquire of me, declares the Sovereign LORD.’” Ezekiel 20:1-3

On August 14, 591 B.C., some of the elders came to Ezekiel to inquire of the LORD. God would not let them. In His explanation of why He would not let them, God seems to be contradicting what He said in chapter 18. In chapter 18 it was clear that judgment would not come because of what the generations before had done, but that each generation, each person, would be judged for their own actions. Yet this chapter seems to say just the opposite. But close examination reveals that God is saying that this generation will be judged because it is doing the same things as the previous generations. They have not learned from their history. God reviews for them—yet again—what the previous generations have been judged for, allowing for this generation to repent and not repeat the same harmful practices. Because their heart was not set on repentance, they were not truly seeking to inquire of the LORD, they were seeking to manipulate the LORD. I consider all that is revealed of the history of this nation. God in His sovereignty has chosen to include in His preserved Word the harmful choices His people have made and the judgment that it has brought. This has been presented so that future generations can learn how to avoid that judgment. I must learn from these truths. These accounts are not just random history stories with no cohesion. The Old Testament is a carefully presented and preserved portrayal of God’s dealings with His people. He reaches out in love and they respond in disobedience. The disobedience requires discipline that could easily be avoided with repentance. Yet repentance, by and large, does not come. History, over and over again, repeats itself for the entire life of this nation. Rather than genuinely inquiring of the LORD, the people come to rationalize their sin.

O LORD, help me learn from this history. I see how I continue to repeat the same things over and over again, choosing to disobey instead of responding in loving obedience. I live among a people that continue to choose this as well. We are not completely given over to You LORD. We rationalize our misbehavior and presume upon Your grace. Forgive us. Revive us. In Your kindness, lead us to repentance. Awaken us to Your love! Awaken us to Your mission! Let us not repeat history. Please, LORD, let us learn from history. Amen.

Thursday, May 30, 2019

Exhausting

Ezekiel 21-22

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed? Then confront her with all her detestable practices and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O city that brings on herself doom by shedding blood in her midst and defiles herself by making idols, you have become guilty because of the blood you have shed and have become defiled by the idols you have made. You have brought your days to a close, and the end of your years has come. Therefore I will make you an object of scorn to the nations and a laughingstock to all the countries. Those who are near and those who are far away will mock you, O infamous city, full of turmoil.’” Ezekiel 22:1-5

I find myself exhausted reading these prophecies. Over and over again, God is striving to reach His people so that they will understand and turn to Him in repentance. There are so many different ways that He reaches in to show them what they are doing and they refuse to see. I try to imagine what Ezekiel felt as he repeatedly shared this message to people with deaf ears. How exhausting was this for him? I try to imagine the conversations he had with God. I can imagine him begging God to open the hearts of the people to hear these words and turn from their selfishness and sin. I can imagine him pleading with God to draw His people to repentance. Each time there was a new prophesy, I can almost imagine Ezekiel asking the LORD if this would be the time they would understand and turn from their wicked ways. But it was not to be. The people would not listen and they would not repent and so they would not find life. I get exhausted as well. I ask the LORD to give me a message that will be clear to the people I meet, yet so many reject His truth and His word. So many are content to embrace temporary pleasures instead of the overwhelming joy and peace that comes from abandoning self.

O LORD, I find myself so many times exhausted in the battle to which You have called me. It seems that there are so many who do not have ears to hear. I live among a people in a generation that truly believes they do not need You. We are so self-sufficient and able to meet all our own needs—at least that is the lie we have believed. Strengthen me to stay faithful to Your call and Your message each moment of the day! For Your glory. Amen.