

The Weekly Word

June 17-23, 2019

May the truth of God's Word fill you and inspire you. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, June 17: Jeremiah 11 – God never gives up on us...

Day 11 in Jeremiah, it continues to be a difficult read. Israel continues to be scolded by the Lord and it is difficult for me to find a morsel with which to feed my soul.

After reading the entire chapter I stepped back hoping a big picture approach might help. It was then that I realized that God is continuing to speak...

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: (1).

Despite the fact that Israel has been doing many things that anger and hurt the Lord, God continues to reach out to and speak with Israel. The Lord has not turned His back on them. God has not abandoned them. God continues to pursue them out of love.

I realized the same is true for me. God never gives up on me (us). He continues to extend a hand of fellowship and love even if I will not accept it.

When John writes, *God is love* (1John 4:16), John isn't exaggerating! That is the one attribute that we are told...God is. LOVE. And the Lord continues to display His love for Israel by calling them home to renewed faith in Him.

And God does the same for me and you...

The onus is on us to turn and grab God's hand and walk back into His fold through repentance and confession of Jesus.

Oh, Lord God, I turn and run to You. I long for Your embrace and I delight in Your abiding Love. Thank You and bless You. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, June 18: Jeremiah 12 - You are always on their lips but far from their hearts...

Big picture wise, I love that this chapter is a question and answer. It comforts me to read throughout the Bible that God answers our questions. I have never had God answer me with the specificity that Jeremiah received and reported in this chapter. Still God answers prayer... more importantly God is with me and answers my prayers.

Detail wise the second half of verse 2 caught my attention: *You are always on their lips but far from their hearts.*

I would have thought that since God is always on their lips, He would have been in their hearts as well, but that is exactly **not** what God says. Jeremiah's comment caught my attention... How is it that God is on these peoples' lips but not in their heart.

I wondered, is Jeremiah saying that they 'talk' a good faith but don't live it???

Are they classic hypocrites who present that they have faith but behind the façade they don't?

More to the point, how can I guard myself from a similar fate? What must I do to make sure that my lips and heart are in sync, loving God.

I think my answer begins with being honest with myself and honest with the Lord. Beyond that there are certainly some behaviors that I can practice like...keeping short accounts, regular confess of sin, and having others with whom I am accountable, for starters.

Understanding that sin is always lurking in the shadows, also comes to mind. Also, I admit that I am a sinner and my only refuge is my Savior Jesus.

Lord, I cannot walk the walk of faith alone. I need brothers and sisters by my side and I need You in my heart. Holy Spirit, work in me and keep me close, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, June 19: Jeremiah 13 - I am a law-breaker in need of someone to save me ...

My body grows weary of God's constant and repetitive judgments against Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah continues to be a difficult read for me...

Today I found myself wondering what accusations God could levy against my country. The list is long:

- Killing children in the womb.
- Not caring for the poor and needy.
- Mistreatment of aliens.
- Favoritism based on race, economic status, country of origin.
- The way we treated slaves and native peoples.

I wonder also about treaties we have broken; wars and covert actions by governmental agencies solely to press our agenda in the world; torture of combatants in places like Guantanamo; the way government, religious and private industries harbored sexual harassment and abuse for years. If I spent more time, I am sure I could add to this list...

Where this took me was to thoughts of the average person. As a rule, I don't believe I take part in these problem areas, but do I carry any ownership of these God dishonoring character traits since I am a citizen of this country and likely my life has benefited from these activities?

I am sure there were some citizens of Judah and Jerusalem who, as a rule, didn't participate in the condemned actions that God speaks of in this and other chapters of Jeremiah.

As I think about this, I bump into two concerns. One is my choice of the phrase 'as a rule.' I haven't tortured combatants nor have I owned slaves or broken a treaty, but I do not think I am fully exonerated when it comes to not caring for the poor and needy and favoritism based on race and economic status. And there is probably more I could/should do regarding the issues of mistreatment of aliens, poor and needy.

One understanding I have from the whole of Scripture is that, from God's perspective, if you break His law a little or a lot you are a law-breaker deserving of punishment.

My second concern revolves around what responsibility I hold knowing certain things are being perpetuated but I do nothing within my responsibility to stop it.

All of this confirms for me that I am a law-breaker in need of someone to save me. By God's grace and design Jesus came to my rescue. I am not off the hook I still should do what I should do, BUT the weight of my guilt and the ultimate punishment for my sins has been lifted by Jesus when he was lifted upon the cross. For this I am eternally grateful and hopefully set free to live as God would have me live to bring honor to His name.

Jesus, Spirit, Father, help me grow to be a son that honors You. Through Jesus I pray. Amen.

Thursday, June 20: Jeremiah 14 – As bad as it gets...

My heart is crushed by the words of this chapter... particularly verses 11-12: *Then the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for the well-being of this people. Although they fast, I will not listen to*

their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague.”

How bad it has gotten. God says, ‘Don’t even pray for them’!

I know the story doesn’t end here. I know that after His righteous punishment God will yet again call His people home. A remnant will return and rebuild Jerusalem which God destroyed as punishment.

Still I sit horrified... that the Lord is so angry that He orders Jeremiah NOT to pray for the people...

Oh, I hope and pray that it never grows so dark again that God says, ‘Enough, no more prayers for this country or that country or the lost in general’.

My heart quakes... it is a frightful thing to be a sinner in the hands of an angry God, as Jonathan Edwards intoned, launching The Great Awakening...

Lord, I pray for my world. I pray that Your people will be enough light in this world that we temper Your anger as we labor to share Your Good News.

Help me to be an effective ambassador of Your great name. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Friday, June 21: Jeremiah 15 – God decides; Absolute sovereignty ...

This chapter opens with terrifying words... *Then the LORD said to me: “Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ tell them, ‘This is what the LORD says: “ ‘Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity’ (1-2).*

Ouch. Even if Moses and Samuel, two great prophets of Israel, were to pray and intercede for Judah/Jerusalem, God would not listen to them. That is quite an indictment! God’s mind is made up...

At this point the Lord asserts His sovereignty, *Where shall we go?’ ... ‘This is what the LORD says: “ ‘Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.* God determines their destination. God decides their fate.

Absolute sovereignty, I thought. God decides, end of discussion.

There are times when I, and frankly everyone I know, cringes at the absolute nature of God’s sovereignty. God decides... it seems to fly in the face of humanities’ ‘free will.’ “Wait, I thought I decided...”

I am not going to solve this century’s old debate this morning. I am not even going to try. I am just going to sit with the Lord’s Words, *Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.* And allow this Word to seep into my bones and soul. God decides... end of discussion.

God decides...

I don’t have it all worked out, how something that feels like I decided fits with God decided. I am just sitting with the second side of that equation. God decides.

Twice more in the Bible, Jeremiah 43:11 and Rev 13:10, almost the exact same words are used to convey the same sentiment. God decides fates. God decides.

I sit under the sovereignty of God, recognizing God’s greatness and my smallness...

Lord, what a joy and what a blessing to be able to address You as Father, Daddy, Pops. Oh, what joy it is to know and be known by You. Through Jesus I pray. Amen.

Saturday, June 22: Jeremiah 16 - Deliverance once... deliverance once again!...

A glimmer of hope shines through in verses 14-15. *“However, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ but it will be said, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their ancestors.*

Yes, disaster is on the horizon, but just as God brought Israel out of Egypt, so it will be said God brought Israel out of the land of the north. Deliverance once... deliverance once again!

The Lord God is a God of grace and mercy. He keeps His Word; His people are His people. Though angry and righteously punishing them, He will not forget His covenant with them.

This gives me peace knowing that God will not forget His promises. God will keep His Word... God’s promises of salvation and forgiveness are real and true and something I can hold onto, something I can stake my life and my future upon with certainty.

God will keep His Word.

And to this I say, Halleluiah!

Lord, I bless You... keeper of Your Word. God of promises kept. I praise You and I bless You and look forward to tomorrow when I can join with brothers and sisters and praise You, Lord God of heaven and earth. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Sunday, June 23, 2019, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the Living Hope website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@LivingHopeCT.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.