

Where Is The Lord

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[0 : 00] The word of the Lord came to me, Jeremiah writes, saying, Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord.

Our God and Father, I am very conscious that I can't speak unless your word has come to me, and we can't hear unless it is authentically your word.

And we need to be aware that you have spoken to us in Jesus Christ. Grant that we may know that in these few minutes we have together.

We ask in his name. There is one question which comes in the text this morning, and the question is, Where is the Lord?

And I would like you now to all turn to one another and to ask that question to one another, Where is the Lord in your life and in your circumstances?

[1 : 34] You, of course, won't do it because you don't believe I mean it. But there is a very real sense in which I do mean it.

And there is a very real sense in which the purpose of the coffee hour is that you may in fact do that. And that you may spend the whole of your life with that private agenda, that in whatever situation you are in, you might be asking that question, Where is the Lord in this situation?

And that would be very commendable if you do that. When we began the service this morning, I used that verse, Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.

Call ye upon him while he is near. Because that's what we are involved in, to know where the Lord is in the circumstances of our world.

And to understand as clearly as we can the answer that the Lord himself and alone can give to the question. And as we learn to ask the question, so we learn to discover what the answer is.

[2 : 53] The great fault of the people to whom Jeremiah preached this sermon in chapter 2 is that they had stopped asking the question.

They weren't doing it anymore. The priests weren't doing it anymore. And I speak to a city, to a culture, to a country.

It is not doing it anymore. We are not seeking the Lord. We're not asking the question. I hope you will excuse me.

Because it's Remembrance Day, I become somewhat introspective. But I will carry on anyway, whether you excuse me or not. When I was young, the great adventure in life was to go off to war and take the uniform of the king and to leave your family and to join in battle and hopefully to survive and to come home.

This gave meaning to life. It gave adventure. It meant you had a deep love and loyalty to the country you had fought for.

[4 : 11] And if you died in battle, you would be remembered by your grateful countrymen. That was the challenge. But this all changed with Vietnam, which demonstrated the futility of war, the ignominy of defeat, and instead of wanting to remember, as in Remembrance Day, people wanted to forget.

But what happens to a generation of people like us, who never go to war, hundreds of thousands of people who spend the whole of their lives hammering out the meaning of their lives in the acquisition of power, prestige, and self-fulfillment, they don't die on the battlefield, but are often spiritually and psychologically and emotionally maimed and destroyed by fighting in a war that nobody wins.

I suspect that I personally, and perhaps you, suffer from never having gone to war when every generation before us has done so.

I say suffer, because I would like to have a cause greater than my own self-preservation. I would like to belong to a country the citizens of which knew and understood the meaning of it, a country to which I could make a significant contribution, rather than a land whose resources I seem to have exhausted.

A lot of people think of Canada as a land to be owned and not a country to belong to, whether you own any part of it or not.

[6 : 12] You will remember the slogan for God and country. That is what became the ground of being and the foundation of being for many who went to war.

They came back feeling they had, at a crucial hour in history, offered their lives for God and country. We, as a people, have no faith in God and seem to be watching the dissolution of our country.

We are a very seriously demoralized people. In that respect, we have a wonderful and peculiar and altogether greater battle to fight.

We begin to see what it is to be citizens of one world that every nation now must include every other nation. The world cannot easily be divided into the good guys and the bad guys, for we are not good, any of us, and we're trying to set limits to how much evil we can manage and tolerate.

I want to talk to you now about Jeremiah 2, who at the dawn of our conscious history draws up the battle plan around which the great human struggle, the ultimate human struggle, the great war must be waged.

[7 : 45] For we have, in our generation, with great boldness, challenge the existence of God, the purpose of God, the providence of God, the authority of God.

We have a vision of handling of our own affairs, making and enforcing our own rules, and managing our own planet, and ultimately exploiting for our purposes the whole of the universe.

We see God as an idea whose time has passed, an idea we used to use to hide from our true destiny, as we thought of it, someone to whom we have relegated our true responsibility, and with a kind of brash braveness, we have tried to take from God the responsibility for our lives.

Jeremiah says in chapter 2, he preaches the sermon we need to hear. Look at it. Chapter 2, verse 1.

The point of that verse is that God is the Lord, the God of Israel, and as he is the God who spoke to our fathers by the prophets, he is the God who now speaks to us by a son, Jesus Christ, whose name sounds very sweet to us.

[9 : 24] Israel was a people to whom the word of the Lord came as it comes to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches us the Old Testament.

So the word of the Lord has come to us in Jesus Christ, and we can't sidestep it. As the word of the Lord came through Jeremiah to his generation, see verse 2.

What does verse 2 say? I remember your devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.

God centered his love on one nation to demonstrate his love to every nation. It's like you when you're looking for a wife or husband.

You can't marry them all, so you pick one, and you commit yourself to that one. God picked one nation among all the nations on earth, and he loved it with a kindness and a loving faithfulness, which would be the very basis of the existence of that people.

[10 : 53] God has spoken. God has loved. Look at verse 3.

Israel was holy to the Lord. The first fruits of his harvest. What was so special about Israel among the nations of the world?

Nothing except that they were to be the first fruits. They were to be the elder son. They were to be the ones on whom God poured his love so that every other nation and the whole of the world would understand his love.

In the process of history, God was to demonstrate his love to this strange and rebellious people called Israel. They belonged to the Lord.

Through them, all the nations were to come to know God. They were the first missionary society. And their job was that the news would get out that God so loved the whole of the world.

[12 : 13] Look at the next verse, verse 4. Because they failed. It says, What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me and went after worthlessness?

They failed. They found the Lord an unacceptable husband. And they went in pursuit of worthlessness and became themselves worthless.

They did not, as it turns out in verse 6, ask the question, where is the Lord? Well, that's who we are as a church.

That's why nobody should belong to the church for any other reason than that God is the Lord. That God in Christ has conferred his love upon us.

That God has chosen us to demonstrate his love to the whole world and to make us into a mission society to every nation and every people on the earth to demonstrate by word and life and love the reality of God.

[13 : 42] That's what's special about us. That's what's special about us. We, like Israel of old, can fail.

We can go in pursuit of worthlessness and ourselves become worthless. That is, we look at our lives and find they are empty.

There is nothing there. And we can fail to ask the question, where is the Lord? And that's why you need to go to your relationships, to your family, and say in these relationships, where is the Lord? We need to look at our country, which is so torn by so many contending peoples, and we need to say, where is the Lord? The lawyer needs to go into the courts with the private agenda of saying, where is the Lord?

Doctors into the hospitals, teachers into the school. We may not be able to say it in so many words, but that's the agenda that God has set for us.

[14 : 54] And that's the question we must ask in every situation in which we find ourselves. that's the agenda that we have been given as the people of God.

And when we ask that question, we are to remember. And when we remember, then we are to be renewed in our faith and trust in the God who called his people through Jeremiah, the God who calls us to belong to him through Jesus Christ.

That's our job. We are a missionary society. We're not here for our own benefit.

That's why I say you're foolish to belong to the church unless you share in the missionary enterprise, unless you will go into every situation and ask the question, where is the Lord?

And stay there and pray there until you've found what the answer to that question is and can make it known. And in order that you may keep asking the question, remember the faithfulness of God to you in time gone by.

[16 : 17] Amen. Okay. We're now at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

So it's a significant time for us. I want you to do these things. I want you, first of all, don't do it till I tell you.

First of all, just stand. I'm asking Ernie to stand at the back of the church and read to us the names of those who from this congregation gave their lives in the Second World War.

You might be made aware that they're real people. People who, if they were here today, would probably be going to the 715 service. Young men who gave their lives.

So I want you to listen to their names. Then I want us to be quiet for a moment or two in remembrance. Then as we continue standing, I want us to sing O Canada.

[17 : 28] Then without sin. As soon as that's over, we'll sing together the offertory hymn, which is number 46, and continue with the service.

So would you stand, please? Thank you. There it is.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[20 : 10] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[22 : 28] Thank you. O God, a help in ages past. O God, a help in ages past.

A help in ages past. O God, a help in ages past.

A help in ages past. O God, a help in ages past.

O God, a help in ages past. A help in ages past.

Heed all our lives in our review, of that we sing to name, as God has in heaven with O God, who ever since the same.

[24 : 09] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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Amen.

Amen. Gracious God, your word to us is truly indeed.

Receive all we offer you this day, and let your loving kindness be our comfort. For the sake of Jesus Christ, your living word.

Amen.