

Jeremiah's Peers 10am

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[0 : 0 0] If you've eliminated the truth, do you know what you have the freedom to do? Once you've eliminated the truth, it becomes impossible to tell a lie.

Only if truth exists is it possible to tell a lie. So they made a lie and then nobody had to tell the truth any longer. So Jeremiah, who was repulsed by what was happening among the northern prophets, is horror-struck by what's happening among the Jerusalem prophets in Judah.

He says, among them, adultery becomes a normative practice. Luxury, opulence, and complacency trample the ideas of justice into the mud.

The holy city of God, Jerusalem, becomes instead, under the influence of the spin doctors, a city given to luxury, opulence, complacency, and adultery.

And Jeremiah says he's horrified. Understandably, good news. Ungodliness, Jeremiah tells us, becomes totally contagious.

[1 : 2 6] And in verse 15, if you look at it, you will see that there is a sacrament which belongs to the ungodly, which they are invited to partake in, whether they like it or not.

The sacrament of the ungodly is bitter fruit and poisoned water. The prophets become infatuated with their own creative imagination.

They propagate false hopes. They find a market for them. They say, peace, peace, and no harm will come.

They run with a message and shout with a mission. But they have neither a message nor a mission any longer.

They become dreamers, sorcerers, mediums, and generally religious spooks. They are able in what they're doing to confuse people.

[2 : 5 0] They say, I've had a dream, I've had a dream. But they're operating according to the delusions of their own mind. And what they're doing is cultivating amnesia among people.

That's such a convenient disease. And, you see, the whole purpose of the Bible is to confront you with the reality of history.

You can't read the Bible and pretend yours is the only generation that has ever existed. You've got to remember.

And these spin doctors cultivated amnesia among the people. They stole spiritual cliches from one another that they found useful in their tongues.

Their tongues, Jeremiah says, went on wagging long after their brains had shut down.

[4 : 0 7] And the passage concludes that the prophets leave the people to live entirely on spiritual junk food.

That's the diet. Well, that's, that was what Jeremiah saw as the impact of evil at the hands of the spin doctors in the society in which he lived.

And, you see, it's all very familiar stuff. You know all about it. Preachers like me like laying it on heavy. But it's not really that new or original.

And maybe congregations like you like to be titillated with the recurrence of it. But it's, it really is that which Jeremiah said left him with a broken heart, trembling bones, and drunk with grief at the condition of the people.

But, let me tell you, there is reason to rejoice in this chapter. And, and the reason to rejoice is because there is something else here.

[5 : 40] And this is what Jeremiah, the man of faith and the prophet of God, recognized in the midst of all what seemed to be the overtaking by evil.

He, he saw it this way. And if you, if you look through from the beginning to the end of that chapter, chapter 23, verses 6 to 32, Jeremiah makes these proclamations.

He said, instead of the weak puppet king that we have, we will have, we will have a king who will be the Lord, our justice, our righteousness.

And that king will not only establish a pattern of what justice is, he will make us to be that which he has patterned for us.

He will become our righteousness, as well as the pattern of our righteousness. That's the king. The king that Isaiah speaks about when he says, unto us a child is born, the government shall be upon his shoulders.

[7 : 03] That's the king that Jeremiah is referring to. The second thing that Jeremiah says, that God has done a great thing in the past, that all the people of God remember, and that is he took them out of slavery and brought them into a promised land.

Jeremiah says, the great story of the Exodus. Jeremiah says, a greater event is going to take place, and God is going to take all the scattered tribes of Israel out of exile and bring them back to their homeland.

It's sort of the faith that God, who has done great things in the past, is going to do even greater things, so that we might hear these words in terms of the God who has manifested himself to us in Jesus Christ, that this Jesus Christ will come again.

So what we've seen of the greatness of the grace and mercy of God in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we're also given a hope that God is going to do an even greater thing, for he will come again.

So that's part of the faith of Jeremiah. The men who speak for God will stand in the counsel of God and listen and see and hear, and they will know what's going on.

[8 : 34] That is, God will provide such people, and they are to be heard. And then he goes on to say, he shows God complaining about the false prophets, and their concept that they as false prophets, they had a sort of inside mind with God, and they could tell you all about him, because they had a dream, or they had the fascination of their own lurid fantasies, and they thought they came from God.

But God says, and he complains in verse 25, and he says, I've heard what the prophets say. Am I a God only who is nearby and intimate to the false prophets?

No, he says, I am a God who is far away. The God whom we can know intimately is also the transcendent God.

That is, as I stand on Main Island at the close of day and see the panorama of a magnificent sunset of a kind that I have never seen before in my life in its particular exquisite beauty, and you see the ultimate transcendence of God, and he seems magnificent but infinitely remote, but that same God is a God who is near, nearer than hands and feet, a God who by his Spirit indwells us.

That's what Jeremiah tells us about God. And then he goes on and he says, you can't hide from this God.

[10 : 39] There is no secret place. You can't, you know, and, you know, that, you know, I think a lot of religion is devoted to finding a place to hide from God so that you can get away with what you want to.

And, you know, ministers like me are paid a lot of money to help you find that place. And we're lying. Because you can't do it.

The God of whom Jeremiah spoke was a God that you can't hide from. You can't hide any secret of your heart from him.

He goes on and says, do not listen to your prophets. It says, the prophets who prophesy in my name, they say, I had a dream.

I had a dream. And one of the interpreters says of that, that if you invite a prophet to supper and give him a good meal, he'll tell you anything you want to know.

[11 : 48] So, that was their function in life. The, the, they continue these lying prophets, prophesying the delusions of their mind.

They, so that God breaks through all these delusions. And in verse 29, he says, is not my word like fire.

In other words, you know, it's, it's the crucible into which you and your life and me and my life will be placed.

And that crucible will be the word of God. And all that sham and artificial and impure about our lives will be burned away by the word of God.

and we will see that it has no lasting value. So, not only is this word of God like fire, it also says this word of God is like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces so that no matter how hard you try and resist the sovereign will of God, the word of God will come to you and smash your every argument to pieces.

[13 : 12] as you see the reality of it. And that's, I mean, that's what the testimony of the Bible is. Is to how the word of God smashes to pieces those things by which we try and protect ourselves against him.

well, God is against all this. He talks about these contrasts.

And I'd like just to show you the contrasts that Jeremiah sees between the prophet who is committed to the word of God and the spin doctors that have abandoned the word of God.

He says the prophets who are committed to the word of God give you grain not straw.

They don't allow the divorce between sexuality and morality. They don't provide the bitter sacrament of bitter fruit and poisoned water.

[14 : 30] They don't compromise the truth with a lie. They don't advocate amnesia but remembrance.

They don't scatter. They gather. They recognize the reality that you live by the commandments or you live under the curse.

There's no option. They don't provide the God of the weak but the Lord God of eternity. They don't make Jerusalem into a Sodom and Gomorrah but it is the holy city of God.

They don't give you false hopes based on self-generated visions but hope based on visions from the mouth of the Lord.

the false prophets say peace, peace where there is no peace and no harm will come to you.

[15 : 38] The word from one who stands in the counsel of the Lord if you don't hear the word of God you will know the wrath of God. Well that's the contrast between the prophet of God and the word of God becomes the source of a tremendous creativity in our lives while the false prophets allow the years of our life to slowly ebb away without ever finding any place or meaning.

just let me conclude with this Jeremiah is a sad man a broken hearted man a man whose bones trembled as he saw what was happening among his people but Jeremiah saw the coming of the king and the coming of his kingdom and the righteousness and justice of that kingdom and he saw that reality he saw grain instead of straw and this this is what he passed on to us as a prophet peering long into the future but you see we don't we celebrate the reality of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ and what

Jeremiah prophesied concerning our world we rejoice concerning our world that those prophecies have been wonderfully fulfilled in Jesus and so though we need to have the heart of Jeremiah with regard to the tragedies of our world we also need to have the word from God's final prophet Jesus Christ and in that word to find reason to rejoice and to give thanks Amen