

Jeremiah 13

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] I'm reading at verse 15, Jeremiah 13, verse 15. Hear and give ear, be not proud, for the Lord has spoken.

Give glory to the Lord your God, before he bring darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and so on. It's important for us as we go through life to often to stop and to take a reality check as to where we are, to how things are.

It's important for us to do so at a personal level within regard to our own individual lives. It's also good for us to reflect on where we are nationally, to view things realistically.

Because so often, as we look out at life, our vision of life and our assessment of life can be colored. Because of prevailing attitudes, because of the way our minds are often affected by the attitudes and such like of the day.

But it's very important for us, when we have a reality check, to do so with the Word of God. And to figure out just how we're doing, where we are as individuals, where we are as communities, where we are nationally.

[1 : 24] And that's one of the things that God is always doing in the Word. He is challenging His people to examine themselves, to see how they are, where they are, and what the response is to His Word.

And again, when we again think of ourselves here, even I suppose as a nation, very often we look at things and there is no question whatever that although we might be making great strides at one level, that morally, spiritually, we are going further and further and further away from the Lord.

And there is nothing more dangerous in all the wide world than to be backtracking from God. I cannot think of anything worse that a nation can do than to turn their back upon the living and through God.

Because when we go through the Bible, there is only one inevitable result, when people will turn their back upon God. And it is incumbent upon the church to be praying that the Lord will be merciful to us.

Because if God's people don't pray, then there is nobody else that is going to. That the Lord will revive us, and He's able to do so. But although we look at things, and sometimes we say, well, things are becoming worse and worse, we also have tremendous liberties and freedoms.

[2 : 52] Even although our liberty, in many ways, we feel is being curtailed today, and we feel that maybe our lives are being invaded more and more. Yet when we look at some of the other countries in this world, for instance, when you think of if we were living in North Korea tonight, how different it would be.

We still have tremendous freedom. We have tremendous liberties. But these liberties have been given to us at a price. And these liberties are part of, I believe, the whole gospel legacy that Europe and the islands here, the British Isles have.

But as the Lord is challenging His people here, everything is relevant, whether it is thousands of years ago, or whether it is here today. And I want us tonight to look at this, and particularly to ourselves.

Because we must never separate ourselves from our nation. It's all very well for Christians to look and say, ah, well, things are bad.

And just to leave it at that and say, ah, it's a fault of the politicians. It's a fault of the people who make the laws. It's a fault of those who are in authority over us.

[4 : 04] But you find that the Bible challenges, always challenges God's people. And you will find that great people, like Adaniel, always identified himself with the nation.

He never separated himself from the nation. He never said, Lord, forgive the nation. He said, forgive us. He was part of the nation. And he saw himself as much a sinner as anybody else.

And that's got to be the way. Because if we somehow think that we are cut above the rest, if we somehow think that because we come to church or because we are Christians, that somehow it absolves us from responsibilities, then we've got it all wrong.

We are part. We are all individually. We are accountable. And so as we look at this, let help us, we ask the Lord to help us to look at ourselves.

Now, as we know, Jeremiah had an incredibly difficult ministry. And I often wonder, sometimes when I read in Jeremiah, how would Jeremiah be judged today?

[5 : 08] I'm sure Jeremiah would be judged a failure. People would look at Jeremiah's ministry and say, you know, he doesn't really have a place. Nobody listens to him.

People are doing the very opposite to what he says. He might be, according to the way that people would assess things and make judgments, they would say, Jeremiah actually is a failure.

And yet the word of God shows us that there were few, if ever, more committed servants of God. Jeremiah might not have been successful in the way that we measure success, but he was utterly and altogether faithful in the most trying, in the most difficult circumstances because God's judgments were coming.

And they were coming to a people who refused to listen. Jeremiah was going out to a people who had stopped listening. And there was only one step between where they were at and the judgment.

And the sad thing for Jeremiah is that people actually thought that Jeremiah was a traitor because he was coming with God's word and that he was coming to reveal to them what God was saying.

[6 : 23] And they were saying because he was bringing the words of God which were words of judgment, they were saying Jeremiah is against us. He's a traitor. And yet the other prophets were coming with good things and they were saying everything's fine, everything's going well, just carry on the way you are.

God's happy with you. God wasn't. But Jeremiah was the one who was faithful. And at the end of the day what we've got to remember the welcome home to glory will always be well done, good and faithful servant.

We've always got to remember that that is what God is looking for from all of us. It's a faithfulness. And I suppose that's where we always feel that we're coming short.

Anyway, we find that Jeremiah here is describing some of the terrible things that are the terrible judgments that are coming. But it's like a last call to the Jews.

It's like a last call. And he's saying in verse 15, hear and give ear. Be not proud for the Lord has spoken. And so when Jeremiah is saying hear and give ear, it's like he's saying, look, stop.

[7 : 41] Pay attention. Don't just allow the words to drift in and drift out. Don't just listen to them a little and then forget them. Give your total focus, your total and absolute determined concentration on this because this is the voice of God.

God is speaking. This is not something that you can take or leave. This is not something that's okay. This is reality. This is the voice of the living and through God.

And we see the reason why the people had stopped listening. Be not proud for the Lord has spoken. And that is one of the great reasons why people stop listening to the voice of God.

It is because of pride. Pride, as it says, is a mother of sins. Pride is sadly part and partial of who we are and what we are. And so often with regard ourselves and with regard to the gospel, pride stops us listening to the Lord.

And part of the way that pride works when we face God's word is that we compare ourselves to other people rather than comparing ourselves to what God says of us in his word.

[9 : 06] And that is one of the most dangerous things. because, you know, if you compare yourself to other people, you will always find in other people something that you can point a finger and say, oh, see what he does, see what she does.

I wouldn't do that. And all of a sudden when you see that, you puff yourself up, there's this sort of thing, oh, well, I'm not too bad. And we're guilty of that.

Often at a very, very subtle, we're looking at other people and we're always passing judgments and we're congratulating ourselves and we're saying, we're not too bad.

My friend, that's not the way that God operates. That's not the way that he works. We are to measure ourselves against his word. That's the balance.

That's the measuring rod. And so there is pride. There's pride of mind. An awful lot of people are proud in their mind and they say, I don't need this.

[10 : 02] Hey, we're living in the 21st century. This is ancient stuff. This is for people long ago.

Or maybe it's for people who are not very clever. But we're enlightened. We're good minds that have been grappling with great issues.

We're well read, well versed. We're into a different territory. territory. This is for long ago. And people set themselves up and dismissed the Bible, dismissed God's word because of their own pride.

Nothing new under the sun. People's minds were proud. Back there in the days of the Jews when God spoke to them, it was the same thing.

Proud in heart, self-righteousness. As we said, comparing one to another. I might not be perfect, but I'm not bad. Not that bad.

[11 : 04] And so self-righteousness is this curse that follows us all through life. And again, we've got to measure ourselves against God's judgment. And what does God say? There is none righteous.

No, not one. Not one. Anywhere. We have all sinned. And what? Come short of the glory of God. And because of that, we are all by nature under condemnation.

We're all guilty before God. And it's not a matter of little sins or great sins. We are under condemnation. So, this is where the problem lies.

This is where people are proud in mind and proud in heart, proud in will, where they won't submit their will before the King Jesus. Where people will say, look, it's my life and I'll do what I want.

I'm in charge. You know, we don't want to give up. You know, it's the hardest thing. It's the hardest thing to give up. That's what keeps people away, I think, more than anything else from becoming a Christian.

[12 : 13] You might be here tonight and there might be things within you and you say, you know, I really, I really need to get right with God. I want to become a Christian, but do you mean that I have to hand my whole life over to God?

I can't do that. I want to keep a bit for myself. There's a part here I just want to lock away. I want to be in control of that. I don't want to give myself all to God.

That's one of the big problems. But you know, even when we become Christians, it's still a problem. There is still within us that which still wants little parts that we want to be in control of.

It's an ongoing battle. My friend, ask God to take you to the place where you'll submit before him. Otherwise, you're going to go on in a lifelong struggle, a lifelong battle, resisting, resisting, resisting.

Give in. Give in tonight. Give in to the king. Anyway, we see here that the word is, hear and give ear. Be not proud, for the Lord is spoken.

[13 : 21] And then we read, give glory to the Lord your God. Now, again, sometimes we might say, how do we give glory to the Lord God?

Because we know that we cannot at one level add to the essential glory of God. However, when you think about it, God has at one level, he has revealed his glory.

And we can't add to some of the glory of God. For instance, his own essential glory we cannot add or detract from. We can't increase it or alter it.

But as I said, his glory is revealed in different ways. For instance, the psalm tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God. When we look up to the sky and we see the sun, and at night we see the moon and the stars, when we see the work of creation, it reveals to us the glory of God.

The cross of Christ reveals to us the glory of God. Because Paul said that God forbid that I should glory in another but save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[14 : 30] So all these things speak about the glory of God. However, our shorter catechism will tell us that the chief purpose of our existence in this world is to glorify God.

So we have to ask the question, how do or how can we give glory to God? Well, there's various things, very simple things. And the first is by acknowledging God in who we are and what we are, in what we do and in what we say.

You see, there are some people, and in fact, and sadly, there are a lot of people, who will never seek deliberately to give glory to God because they don't believe in him. Or at least they say they don't.

It's very interesting, there's a growing number of people that you will meet who will say that they're atheists, they're humanists. Well, you won't find the word atheist in the Bible or humanist.

You know, there's only one description of such a person, and it tells us in Psalm 14 that that person is a fool. The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.

[15 : 39] So, biblical description of an atheist is a fool. However, that being said, as we live out our lives, let us seek to glorify God in what we do and in what we say, in very simple ways.

Say, for instance, in saying grace before you eat something. It doesn't have to be a long grace. But that's a very simple thing, where you acknowledge that God is.

That God is the one who has given you. That God is the one who has provided for you. And you know, when you stop to think about it, when we think of what we have, the food we have to eat, and the Lord has not just given us food in order that we have something to nourish our body, but he has also given us taste buds to enjoy different flavors.

God has given us so many, it's God who has given us the senses. And so often we need to stop and to think and realize there is so much in life we ought to be giving God thanks.

And when we praise and thank God, we actually were told we glorify his name. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me. That's what the psalm says.

[16 : 57] So in very simple ways, day by day, that's living in a way where we glorify God. It is vital.

And here's something that's very important. I want, and I'm sure all of you do, but that people will know that you believe in God. Even tonight if you're here and you say, no, I'm not a professing Christian, I would hope at least, and I believe you do, that you will say, I believe in God.

And the reason I'm saying that is, I don't think you'd be here tonight in church. I think your very coming to church tonight is an indicator that you believe in God.

In fact, you're acknowledging God by coming here tonight. Because the majority of people in Stornway aren't in church. And yet, you have come to church to worship God.

You have come, and that in itself is testifying. It is an acknowledgement in your life of God. And so, at one level, you are glorifying God by doing that.

[18 : 12] But the second thing that we would say is, and this is even more important, that we come to know the God that we're seeking to glorify. Because, you know, you'll speak to a lot of people, and they'll say to you, I believe in God.

And you say to yourself, that's good. But for a lot of people, I'm not talking about here, but generally, amongst the public, if you were to press home to help them to define who God is, they might have a problem.

Because very often, people, the God they believe in is someone who is like themselves. And in fact, it's something that the Lord condemns amongst his people.

Remember, in Psalm 50, we find the Lord complaining against his people. And he said to them, these things you have done, and I have been silent.

You thought that I was one like yourself. That's what God is saying to his people. You think that I'm just like you. Because you got a wrong assessment of me.

[19 : 26] you brought me down from the heights of glory, from the otherness of my being, to be just like yourself. And so you're judging me according to the way you judge yourself.

And you're living all wrong because of that. You know, sometimes we have to hold up our hands and say, yeah, that's me. Because we bring God down.

We take him down from the heights of glory. And the Lord is saying to us, you know, my ways, my thoughts are as high, you look at a plane. At 37,000 feet, it's only a wee dot.

Well, when the Lord says, just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways, it's way beyond that. It's way, way beyond the distance between our thinking and God's thinking, between his ways and our ways.

It is so vast. But sometimes we bring God down to the level of our own thinking. So it's vital that we come to know the God that we believe in, and that's where we find him revealed to us in his word.

[20 : 29] A shorter catechism, which condenses in the most wonderful way the Bible, it says to us when the question is about who is God. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchanged in his being, in his wisdom, his power, his holiness, his justice, his goodness, his truth.

The Bible reveals many things to us about God. God is that God is love. In him there is no variableness, no shadow of turning.

We read, for instance, the Lord God is merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.

We also read that God is a consuming fire. So, it is important for us in seeking to give glory to God that we know the God that we're seeking to glorify.

We also give glory to God when we come to him confessing our sin. Because we are recognizing when we confess our sin that he is holy and that he is just.

[21 : 42] That's what we're doing when we're confessing. We confess that he is king, that he is Lord. We're also confessing and acknowledging that he is the only one who can forgive sin.

But it takes us even further than that in order to glorify God we must even go further. We must come to accept all that he has said to us regarding the way of salvation.

And this is bringing us further and further and further on where we recognize that God has set a way of salvation in his son Jesus Christ.

And we're glad we accept it. Even before we actually maybe come to faith in Jesus Christ it is coming to believe. This is part of the way of salvation.

It's accepting and believing with your heart hey this is the way of salvation. I really believe the way to God is in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. I am now fully persuaded that there is no salvation apart from him.

[22 : 48] And you know when we come to that place we're giving glory to God even if we haven't yet come to personal faith in Jesus. But you know when we come to that place where we're acknowledging and recognizing his authority his lordship that there is no other way of salvation I believe we're only a step away.

We've come to the very brink. And that is where we must go on and say Lord now that I know now I am persuaded that there is no other way of salvation will you save me?

Have mercy upon me a sinner. And you know when we do that the Lord will say yes I will. And maybe it takes time for you to come to an assurance of persuasion that the Lord has saved.

But this is the way. And when you come into salvation you're really bringing glory to God. And then every day of your life you're seeking to glorify God. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and so glorify your Father which is in heaven.

And it's our big sorrow of how often we don't do what we want. And it's part of the difficulty in our Christian life.

[24 : 05] And we talked about pride earlier on and all these things that we said are part of what we realize. We still, if there's anybody here tonight who's not a Christian and you think that what I was saying earlier on about pride of will and pride of mind and pride of heart only exists before a person becomes a Christian, no, don't.

It's part of what we struggle with all our lives. But then give glory to the Lord your God, notice, before he bring darkness.

darkness. This is the result of refusing to bring glory to the Lord, is that he will bring darkness.

Now this word darkness is speaking of judgment. And here is the God who is light in himself, the God who has brought light. light. But if we turn our back upon the light, if we refuse to listen, if we deliberately close the book and close our hearts and close our minds to his truth and go our own way, there is nothing else for us but darkness, his judgment.

And it's an awful thought, and this is why I'm saying we look at it personally, we look at it individually, but we also look at it nationally. That's what was happening to the land, to God's people, is that they had deliberately turned their back upon the Lord.

[25 : 39] And notice, before he bring darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains. Here are people who ought to be walking in the light, people who ought to be running free, but now they're going to be groping in darkness and stumbling because there's hardly any light and it needn't be like that.

And you know, what was true then is the same today. And if our leaders turn their back, if our nation turns its back, if we turn our back, there is no other way.

We will be groping in darkness. Those in authority over us will be making decisions that are stupid, where they will be doing things that aren't right.

Why? Because they're no longer getting the light from God. God has handed over. You see, this is the worst judgment. Do you know the worst judgment is when God stops speaking.

As long as God is speaking, there's still hope. As long as God is speaking to us, there is still an opportunity. But you know, when he stops, and that's what happened to God's people, he spoke and he spoke and he spoke and he shook them and there were providences coming and he spoke and he spoke and he spoke and he wouldn't listen, wouldn't listen.

[26 : 59] Then he stopped speaking. And then the judgments followed on. And that's what happens. Remember Saul, King Saul.

Saul was a man who had everything. And you remember how Saul continued to disobey God. And he was closing his mind and it was pride was the problem with Saul.

A man who began humbly but he became very proud. And he thought his ways were better than God's ways. Remember what happened? We find that the Lord began to leave Saul bit by bit.

And we find that Saul went into a downward spiral of darkness. Darkness of mind. Darkness is decisions. You read the, go through 1 Samuel and through into there and 2 Samuel and you read the history of Saul.

From somebody who seemed to be making the right decisions, he started making all the wrong decisions. Because he had turned his back upon God. He stopped listening to God. He was doing his own thing.

[28 : 06] God said, all right, I'm going to leave you. And Saul went into darkness, a downward spiral, until in the end he was actually consulting the powers of darkness.

He went into darkness. He's a picture of what we have here. And we hear the cry, the woeful cry of Saul, God has departed from me.

He was aware of what had happened. It's a fearful judgment. And that is the inevitable end if we turn our back upon the Lord.

Darkness. And on it goes. And if we live in darkness, and if people die in darkness, then the scripture tells me the inevitable end is outer darkness.

That's what Jesus describes as hell. Not just darkness, but outer darkness forever. It's a fearful concept.

[29 : 08] Well, tonight, the Lord is calling us to hear, to give ear, because he has spoken. and he's calling us to give glory to God.

And we're always very, I'm so conscious myself, even at a time like this when I preach, of how far, far short we come. How far short I come in everything.

It's often one of the most difficult things is to go and preach when you yourself feel a failure. But we're all like that. But the thing is, this is what God requires.

And at least if we feel it within our heart, and we're going to the Lord and saying, Lord, I'm really sorry for my sin. I want to be who you want me to be.

Lord, may your grace work within me. Help me, Lord, to go in the right way. Help me, Lord, to live a life that is seeking to glorify you. May we all seek that.

[30 : 08] Let us pray. Oh, gracious and ever-blessed Lord, we pray to encourage us in the word, but help us also to take heed of this word.

It is serious, it is solemn. We give thanks that we're hearing it, because there are many who have chosen not to. We pray, oh, Lord, that you will work in many hearts, work in people's hearts here tonight, work in hearts that aren't here, that people who have maybe grew up with the gospel, and have turned away from it.

Lord, we pray that some of the word that they heard when they were young may come back to them, and that their souls may begin to hunger and to thirst for the living and through God.

We pray to watch over us and take us all to our home safely, we pray. Grant us grace in everything, forgiving us our sin, in Jesus' name. Amen. We conclude singing in the 90th Psalm, from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm number 90, and the tune is Martyrdom.

This is from the Scottish Psalter, in the second part of the psalm book, and it's on page 349, 349, Psalm 90, verses 1 to 4.

[31 : 32] Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in generations old, before thou ever had brought forth the mountains great or small, wherever thou hadst formed the earth and all the world abroad, even thou from everlasting art to everlasting God, thou dost unto destruction man at his mortal turn, and unto them thou sayest again, ye sons of men return, because a thousand years appear no more before thy sight than yesterday when it is past, or than I watch by night.

Psalm 90, on page 349, the tune is martyrdom. Lord, there was been our dwelling place in ■■■. The quarrel has been our dwelling past, is generation of before the man that has The Lord has brought forth the mountains, great or small.

If ever love has formed the earth, and all the world hath grown, If love from everlasting hour to everlasting dawn, If love has come to destruction, and all this mortal turn, And come to them, and six again, these sons of men return.

Because a thousand years appear, no more before my sight, But yesterday, when it is past, for now I'll watch my night.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.