

Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. He had an exceptionally sensitive spirit to God's Spirit. God was deeply grieved at the sin of God's people. Jeremiah sensed God's grief and it broke his heart to the point of tears. Jeremiah also knew of God's goodness, mercy, and forgiveness in the deepest parts of his soul. Jeremiah saw the people of God destroying their own souls forsaking God, God's goodness, mercy, and forgiveness. The people preferred their sin over God. **1. A sign of God's judgment is when God gives His people over to their sin.** God pulls back his restraints and simply lets the people do what they want no matter how much it offends God. Discerning believers feel this ever so deeply. You never want God to give you over to your sin. It is good to often pray, "Lord, please do not give me over to my sin." "Please stop me in my tracks before I sin."

Jeremiah loved God and Jeremiah had a heart filled with God's love for the people. Jeremiah preached his heart out, but the people refused to listen, similar to Noah before the great flood that covered the world. It was not that Jeremiah was a poor preacher or ineffective, it was that the people's eyes and minds were blind and deaf to the Word of the Lord. They refused to hear the warnings of impending judgment. Jeremiah had to endure much persecution in ministry. His hometown turned against him. No matter how much he suffered as one of God's prophets, he never quit preaching the truth. He endured faithfully until the day God took him home. In the midst of the people's unfaithfulness, Jeremiah was always strengthened by God's faithfulness.

In our own nation I sense an all-out rebellion against God and his holy word. In the middle of the night, I will wake up and sense an incredible evil over our entire land. I believe God has withdrawn certain restraints, specific protections against sin, and this is one reason why there is so much hatred in our land especially as people turn against one another. The Bible predicts this will happen at the end of times. I quote Matthew 24:12, "Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold" (NLT). Another translation, "There will be

more and more evil in the world so most people will stop showing their love for each other" (NCV). I am going to quote from a paraphrase by Eugene Peterson's, The Message, "And then, going from bad to worse, it will be dog-eat-dog, everyone at each other's throat, everyone hating each other." When I read those words, it actually frightens me. It means the majority of the people are choosing to reject God and His perfect love and faithfulness just as they did in the days of Jeremiah. God is grieved by the rampant sin. God gives people over to their sin and the sin brings ruin to a nation. The Bible says, "Do not be deceived, God will not be mocked." "You cannot ignore God or God's ways forever and get away with it" (Gal 6:7 NLT).

Jeremiah saw the sin of the land going from bad to worse. The deeper the sin the harder he preached. The people stiffened their necks, closed their ears, and shut their eyes. You can almost hear them mocking God. "LA LA LA LA LA LA." It would take disaster of pandemic proportions to get the people to humble themselves before God. They lost their country and were taken into captivity in Babylon in 586 B.C. When a nation falls so deeply into sin, it takes a major act of God to wake the people up to who God is. God's judgments do come and for good reason.

God called Jeremiah at a young age to serve the Lord. The Bible says, "Now the Word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations'" (Jeremiah 1:5). **2. God selects specific persons even before birth to do a great work for God.** John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even while he was still in his mother's womb. Jeremiah began serving the Lord at a very young age. God told Jeremiah that he could not use his young age as an excuse not to speak for God. God had plans for Jeremiah and those plans started at a very young age.

The text I am preaching on today is found in the book of Lamentations. I believe Jeremiah wrote this book. He personally witnessed the fall and destruction of Jerusalem in 586

B.C. The temple was burned, the walls around Jerusalem destroyed, and the City of David was set on fire. Jeremiah had preached for years that God's people would lose everything if they refused to repent. Now he saw the destruction firsthand. He did not run around saying, "I told you so." "This is what you get for not listening to me." No, he wrote a book about God's goodness, God's faithfulness, and God's mercies. The greater the judgment the greater was God's power to cause the people to finally repent and return to the Lord God Almighty. With despair everywhere, Jeremiah spoke of the hope that we always have in God.

Lamentations was written to be prayed or sung in worship services devoted to asking God's forgiveness and renewing one's relationship with God (ESV Study Bible notes, pg 1476). It is a liturgy for worship. It includes confession of sins, offers hope, and declares complete dependence on God's grace (ibid. 1476). It is similar to many of the Psalms.

Please know that every time you come to worship you come to face God. You come to hear a Word from the Lord. You come to present your life to God. You come to confess your sins and humbly ask for forgiveness. You come to sing praises to our Most High God. You come to experience the power of the cross of Christ that saves you from your sins and grants you the gift of eternal life. You come to worship because how great is the Lord God Almighty and you are hungry for His very Presence. You come to receive the grace of God which is sufficient for your every need. You come because God has called you to worship. Thank you for coming.

Please take out the pew Bible and turn to page 817. Hear these words of Lament.

**Lamentations 3:1-22(ESV)** <sup>1</sup>I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath; <sup>2</sup>he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light [the Day of the Lord language]; <sup>3</sup>surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long. <sup>4</sup>He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones; <sup>5</sup> he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; <sup>6</sup> he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago.

<sup>7</sup>He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy; <sup>8</sup>though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer; <sup>9</sup>he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked. <sup>10</sup>He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; <sup>11</sup> he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate; <sup>12</sup> he bent his bow and set me as a target for his arrow. <sup>14</sup> I have become the laughingstock of all peoples, the object of their taunts all day long. <sup>17</sup> my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; <sup>18</sup>so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the Lord." <sup>19</sup>Remember my affliction and my wanderings, <sup>21</sup>But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup>The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup>they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup> "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

Jeremiah pours out his lament to God. His entire thoughts are going in one direction but then he stops and turns his eyes upon God and who God is. "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope." Friends, it is your knowledge of God that is the most important knowledge that you have. It is what you know with absolute certainty about God that gives you hope. Assurance and certainty in God is the life of faith. You may find yourself sinking into a pit of depression or worse, despair, and then something that you know with absolute certainty about God comes to rescue you and pick you up. Jeremiah was honest about the pit he was in personally and the nation for they lost everything. But it was in the losing of everything that they discovered what was most important and what was most important was knowing God and living in covenant relationship with God. What he knew about God filled him with hope. Hope is an eager expectation for what God has guaranteed, and God guarantees His people God's steadfast love. This is the love of God that never gives up on you. This is the love of God that refuses to let go of you. This is the love of God that will discipline you severely so you will no longer chose the way of evil and sin but God's way. God's steadfast love is God's grace stooping down to your level and raising you up. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

Everything may look dark, but God is still there. God is not on a vacation or taking a nap. His steadfast love is right there. Turn around, repent, and take it all in, the steadfast love of the Lord.

God's mercies never come to an end. It has been said that grace is God giving to you what you do not deserve. Mercy is God not giving to you what you do deserve. Every time we sin we deserve death for the wages of sin is death, but God is so merciful.

His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. Great is your faithfulness.

I have a fresh appreciation for God's mercies being new every morning. When my mother's Alzheimer's was getting worse, my father had a phrase for my mother that went like this. Every day for Norma is a new day. Every day is a new day. This was true in many ways but when your forgetfulness gets worse, every day is a new day because you cannot remember yesterday. Mother would share with me how she experienced the Lord on a given day and I was glad to hear it because by tomorrow she would have forgotten it, but she would experience God's mercy anew every morning.

Friends, every time we wake up in the morning it is a sign of God's mercy. God has given to us another day. The night did not take us. We have another day to experience God's steadfast love, God's mercy, and God's faithfulness. We may have wept in the night, but joy comes in the morning.

I will close this sermon with a few statements regarding the faithfulness of God.

1. **3. God is always true to His promises.** Friends, our eternal life is based on a promise. Our entire future in eternity is based on God's faithfulness, the fact that God is always true to His Word. God cannot be unfaithful for unfaithfulness goes against his holy nature.

2. No matter how evil the days get, and the days are evil, God is always utterly reliable, holy, and true.
3. **4. No matter how dark this world gets, God's light will one day prevail.** The sin of the world will be exposed. God's judgment will prevail. Man is not the supreme judge, God is. The world may think it is free to sin in any way it chooses, but one day God will expose the lies and the wickedness will be no more.
4. We cannot allow the evil practices of this world to infiltrate into our lives. We as Christians are called to be light, salt, to be different, to be holy, to love Jesus, and not this world. God's faithfulness is what will keep our lives together and from falling apart as this world sinks further away from God and God's truth.
5. **5. It is more important than ever that we in this church truly love one another more than we have in the past.** Please do not let your politics, your view of creation, your stance on abortion, or the sexual issues of our day divide us one from another. We will have disagreements with one another until the day of Jesus Christ. We will also be held accountable to God for the ways we treated one another including our unhealthy judgmental, critical attitudes, with a spirit of condemnation.
6. In the world the love of the many is growing cold. We are not to be like the world. We are called to love each other even as Jesus loves us. Please do not let any relationship in this place to grow bitter and cold. Please be reconciled one to another. We are one family. God is faithful. He has a plan for His people and God is moving history to His end. The end may be sooner than you think. Amen and Amen.