

“ASK FOR THE ANCIENT PATHS”

JEREMIAH 6: 16-21

SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2013

By what reason do you claim the right for a happy, prosperous life, one filled with “that peace which passes all understanding?”

As we go through the sermon today, we will come to understand all the more why it is good and right and proper and natural to strongly and faithfully believe in God’s goodness. If the atheists are right, and they are not, then all of the above comes, if at all, by chance, by coincidence, with no intent or design. We are reminded that there is no ultimate purpose in an original accident.

There are three points I wish to make today.

First: God is the Eternal, all-wise God who created us in His image. Genesis 1: 26

Second: The work of Jesus Christ is as our Savior, to save us from our separation from God and save us for life, both now and forever, with God. Ephesians 2: 8-10

Three: God is able to provide us with every blessing in abundance. 2 Corinthians 9: 8

As we study the life and times of Jeremiah, we find that about a year after King Josiah of Judah had turned the nation toward repentance (627 B.C.) from the widespread idolatrous practices of his father and grandfather, Jeremiah’s sole purpose was to reveal the sins of the people and explain the reason for the impending disaster (destruction of Judah by the Babylonian army and captivity: 587 B.C.).

He tells of the message of God, “When your people say, 'Why has the Lord our God done all these things to us?' you shall say to them, 'As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.'" God’s personal message to Jeremiah, “Attack you they will, overcome you they can’t,” was fulfilled many times in the Biblical narrative. Jeremiah was attacked by his own brothers, beaten and put into the stocks by a priest and false prophet, imprisoned by the king, threatened with death, thrown into a cistern by Judah’s officials, and opposed by a false prophet. When Nebuchadnezzar seized Jerusalem in 586 BC, he ordered that Jeremiah be freed from prison and treated well.

In the eighteenth year of his rule, Josiah ordered the High Priest Hilkiah to use the tax money which had been collected over the years to renovate the temple. It was during this time that Hilkiah discovered the Book of the Law. The book is probably that of Deuteronomy. Hilkiah brought this scroll to Josiah's attention, and the king ordered it read to a crowd in Jerusalem. Hilkiah preached a sermon.

The message of Jeremiah is significant in its emphasis to return to the ways of God, but, more importantly, to return to a rich, faithful, vibrant, life with God. All around him, the leaders and people of his country, the chosen of God, were choosing to look elsewhere for joy, for safety, for meaning, for peace, for fulfillment, for that which would provide them with “every blessing in abundance.”

In Jeremiah 6: 16, Jeremiah so beautifully and forcefully presents the message of God:

“Thus says the Lord: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls, But they said, “We will not walk in it.”

The first point of the message today is God is the Eternal, all-wise God who created us in His image. Genesis 1: 26

So many people have forgotten this, or minimized this, or have not come to an understanding of the profound meaning of this reality. We are God’s creation, created by God out of His love, wisdom, power, and purpose.

This creation is no accident. Therefore, when praying the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done," we are affirming and claiming and proclaiming God's Lordship over creation and ourselves. We are aligning ourselves with God's great purposes and stating, with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me."

Second: The work of Jesus Christ is as our Savior, to save us from our separation from God and save us for life, both now and forever, with God. Ephesians 2: 8-10

There is a second part of this being a creation of God. In John 3: 3 and 5:, Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again. This second birth is into the family of God, made possible by the life and death of Jesus Christ. "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit (by nature and by Spirit of God) he/she cannot enter the Kingdom of God. We have no choice over the first birth, we can only be born again by our personal choice of saying yes to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Our lives then become, in reality, "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20) and "God making his appeal through us."

Three: God is able to provide us with every blessing in abundance. 2 Corinthians 9: 8

The image of God brings with it dignity, honor, respect, value, life, wholeness, completeness, joy. As we read Galatians 5: 22-23, we learn that the Eternal, all-wise God brings to us and for us the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law." In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, we learn that "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He leads me beside the still waters."

The guiding words of Psalm 119: 105 show us the Word of God is a "lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

"In the gospel of John, chapter 10 verse 11: Jesus teaches "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

God show us and leads us to the ancient paths. Yet we so often we choose the newer paths...and then wonder why the message of Jeremiah is as powerful and real today as then.

If you come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that, as we read in 1 Peter 2: 23-25, that Jesus Christ "trusted to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

Our Lord and Shepherd has invited us to walk with Him, back to the ancient paths. Will you walk with Him where the good way is?