

March 16, 2017

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Scripture

Jeremiah 4:9-10, 19-28

⁹On that day, says the LORD, courage shall fail the king and the officials; the priests shall be appalled and the prophets astounded. ¹⁰Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD, how utterly you have deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'It shall be well with you,' even while the sword is at the throat!"

¹⁹ My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain!

Oh, the walls of my heart!

My heart is beating wildly;

I cannot keep silent;

for I hear the sound of the trumpet,

the alarm of war.

²⁰ Disaster overtakes disaster,
the whole land is laid waste.

Suddenly my tents are destroyed,

my curtains in a moment.

²¹ How long must I see the standard,
and hear the sound of the trumpet?

²² "For my people are foolish,
they do not know me;
they are stupid children,
they have no understanding.

They are skilled in doing evil,
but do not know how to do good."

²³ I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.

²⁴ I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.

²⁵ I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,
and all the birds of the air had fled.

²⁶ I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins
before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

²⁷ For thus says the LORD: The whole land shall be a desolation;
yet I will not make a full end.

²⁸ Because of this the earth shall mourn,
and the heavens above grow black;
for I have spoken, I have purposed;
I have not relented nor will I turn back.

Devotional

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God has been calling His people to repentance, but Judah will not turn. This passage gives us a pretty bleak picture of wrath and destruction. The consequences of sin play out

in a startling reversal of the creation narrative as Jeremiah “looks on” at the world’s de-creation back to the chaos from which it was called (vv. 23-26).

As we journey to the cross this Lenten season, we are invited to “look on” along with Jeremiah—to look upon our selves and our world; to look upon the painful reality of injustice and broken relationships caused and perpetuated by our own failures to love God and one another fully. In short, to look upon all to which we would rather turn a blind eye. Our hearts will be broken along with God’s, and we will cry out with Him in anguish. But it is when we have truly looked at all that separates us from God and one another that we are able to “look on” as it is all put to death—nailed to the cross—that we might be freed to live as new creations in Christ.

Prayer

Loving God, you have put to death the sin that separates us from you and one another. In you there is a new creation. In that assurance, allow us the grace to see ourselves clearly, that we may turn again to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.