

Lent Devotional March 19, 2019

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 2:1-13, 29-32

¹The word of the LORD came to me, saying: ²Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD:

I remember the devotion of your youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.

³ Israel was holy to the LORD,
the first fruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it were held guilty;
disaster came upon them,

says the LORD.

⁴Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. ⁵Thus says the LORD:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?

⁶ They did not say, "Where is the LORD
who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep darkness,
in a land that no one passes through,
where no one lives?"

⁷ I brought you into a plentiful land
to eat its fruits and its good things.
But when you entered you defiled my land,
and made my heritage an abomination.

⁸ The priests did not say, "Where is the LORD?"
Those who handle the law did not know me;
the rulers transgressed against me;
the prophets prophesied by Baal,
and went after things that do not profit.

⁹ Therefore once more I accuse you,
says the LORD,
and I accuse your children's children.

¹⁰ Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar and examine with care;
see if there has ever been such a thing.

¹¹ Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?
But my people have changed their glory
for something that does not profit.

¹² Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be shocked, be utterly desolate,

says the LORD,

¹³ for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water.

²⁹ Why do you complain against me?
You have all rebelled against me,

says the LORD.

³⁰ In vain I have struck down your children;
they accepted no correction.
Your own sword devoured your prophets
like a ravaging lion.

³¹ And you, O generation, behold the word of the LORD!
Have I been a wilderness to Israel,
or a land of thick darkness?
Why then do my people say, “We are free,
we will come to you no more”?

³² Can a girl forget her ornaments,
or a bride her attire?
Yet my people have forgotten me,
days without number.

DEVOTIONAL

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Jeremiah did the thankless task of telling his fellow Israelites they were wrong! He found no joy in it. Yet he was obedient and said to them what the Lord gave him to say. It is easier to confront people you don't know than people you do know. Jeremiah knew, lived among, and identified with those to whom he prophesied. It is a sensitive matter to confront those near and familiar to you, for often they take offense and fight back!

Jeremiah was hurt and rejected for his obedience to the Lord. I respect him for what he did. I feel sympathy for his pain. I know what it feels like to be rejected by others for obeying the Lord. Jeremiah's own people had forsaken the “fountain of living water”!

Why do people turn away from what is life-giving? Why do I myself do so? Why did Jeremiah's people build “cracked cisterns that can hold no water”? Where have you and I replaced truth with a lie?

Today, can we listen to the Jeremiahs in our lives and repent? Or will we keep living a lie, keep following “the deceitful waywardness of the human heart” (R. E. Clements)?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to listen to You when I don't like what You are saying—at those times I need to hear You the most. Your words warn me against willfully abandoning You. Thank You for caring enough to confront me. In Christ Jesus I pray. Amen!