

**Sermon - 03-21-21**  
**Ps 51; Jer 31:31-34; Heb 5:5-10; Jn 12:20-33**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**

*A newly ordained pastor, in the first days of his first appointment, was attempting to console the widow of an eccentric man who had just died. Standing before the open casket, the nervous young pastor said, "I realize this must be a very hard blow for you, Mrs. Svenson. Just try to remember that what we see before us is only the husk, the shell of your dear husband—the nut has gone to heaven." ([stewardshipoflife.org](http://stewardshipoflife.org))*

Think back to the image Jesus gave Nicodemus that night we talked about last week – the bronze snake lifted on a tall pole. We are to lift high His glorious cross in all we say and do. In that sign death is defeated.

Jeremiah is a great prophet of Judah – known as the “Weeping Prophet.” He came on the scene at a pivotal time in the history of his nation. There had been truly evil, idolatrous kings for some generations. Yet, in the early days of Jeremiah’s ministry there was a good and righteous king on the throne – King Josiah, the reformer. He reestablished the teaching of the Torah throughout the kingdom. He reinstated the priesthood and cleansed the temple for the true worship of God. He removed the pagan shrines from the high places.

You might think that with a good king on the throne, Jeremiah would prophesy good things for the nation. Not so. King Josiah’s grandfather was Manasseh. He may have been the most wicked king of Judah ever. As a result, the message God gave Jeremiah for the people was one of doom on account of turning away from God and turning to idols. Jeremiah was not a popular man in Jerusalem.

“Manasseh had a record of idolatry, child sacrifice, sorcery and communion with demons. He “filled Jerusalem from one end to another” with innocent blood. And so, while righteous King Josiah would be spared witnessing the downfall of his nation, it was nevertheless inevitable. Hence Jeremiah’s unpopular preaching.” ([watchjerusalem.co.il](http://watchjerusalem.co.il))

The Book of Jeremiah is long – fifty-two chapters. It is filled with warnings against the evil that had become part of Judah’s society over the generations. Jeremiah warns of the end of the monarchy – the end of the temple – and the end of the culture of God’s chosen people. Jeremiah was tortured and imprisoned by the power brokers in Jerusalem. Yet, the Lord spared his life and provided for him so that his prophecy is preserved and comes to us in his writings even today.

With all the warnings and descriptions of suffering Jeremiah brought, we have this passage today coming out of the chapters of his book that promise restoration and blessings. Like a beacon in the dark, Jeremiah brings God’s promise of a fruitful future for God’s people.

How do we get to this wonderful spiritual state where this new covenant writes the law of God’s love in our hearts – and we will know our God and be cleansed of sins? It is through Messiah – the Savior – that this will be done.

It is wonderful, yet Jesus is going to walk through a lonely, painful valley of death to obtain this freedom for us. He tells the Greeks in John’s Gospel, “where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves Me, the Father will honor.” (Jn 12:26) This message is for you and me as well. In our Lenten journey we pass through the ordeal with our Lord Jesus.

The glory of God is with us all the way. We don’t often get to see His glory.

It seems to me we are unaware that God’s glory is so near to us. We may even cry out to God that the trials we face are too much. More than we can bear – that we do not feel His presence in our suffering. Yet, when we honor Him, He is there. The Bible says God inhabits the praises of His people. (Ps 22:3)

The Greeks come to Philip saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” The Lord Jesus declares, “The hour has come for the Son of

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Man to be glorified.” And He prays, “Father, glorify your name.” Then, the Almighty is heard. God has glorified God’s name and will glorify His name again.

Jesus is about to endure what the world will see as a dishonorable, shameful end to all He has stood for. No respect or honor was given by Rome – or the church leadership – to this humble Man who did not defeat His enemies through military might. Blinded and deafened by the systems of the world, they did not perceive that God’s glorious presence defeats the prince of the air – the ruler who dominates by brute force and power.

We often take the narrow view of God’s power – the power to deliver, to defend and to sustain.

We just want to slide through the judgment and wake up in paradise. We need to awaken to the divine truth: The work Jesus did on the cross of crucifixion is the mightiest work in the whole cosmos, accomplished by its Creator. He stripped the power and influence from all world systems. These are the robbers and defrauders and masters of delusion. Power is not by the sword, the gun or the nuclear warhead.

True Power is the eternal glory of God. The greatest manifestation of that power to date is Jesus taking on humanity’s fragile flesh and sharing our death. The defeat of the final enemy resounded through all creation on that glorious morning when Jesus rose up to new life.

We will sing our gratitude and joy on Easter. We will also keep watching and waiting for this Risen Lord to return – bringing His glory into our midst – outshining the sun, moon and stars. Then, He will establish His kingdom forever and bring power and glory into our midst here in a new earth. Amen.