

Sermon - 09/18/22
Ps 79; Je 8:18-9:1; 1 Tim 2:1-7; Lu 16:1-13

The Prophet Jeremiah has been named the “Weeping Prophet.” We see why in our passage from his writing before us today. He needs a spring of water for a head and a fountain of tears for eyes, to weep constantly for his people who are in exile. He lived in the late 7th and early 6th centuries BC. In those years he brought the message of the coming consequences for Judah’s unfaithfulness to God – nobody listened. In 586 BC it all came down. Almost the entire population of the nation were marched off to Babylon into exile. Sorrow was everywhere – after the warnings were over, the nation was left to pay the price. They did not use the time they had been given to repent and begin to serve the One True God.

Jeremiah was called to bring God’s word to God’s people. Recall the parable Jesus told about some renters. A man built a vineyard and let it out to tenants who were to care for it. He traveled to a distant land. The owner sent a slave to collect his share of the produce. They beat him up and sent him away. Among those the landlord sent later to these wicked tenants was a servant whom they beat and mistreated. (Mark 12:1-12) This part of Jesus’ parable describes Jeremiah – and all the prophets God sent to His people. Finally, the landlord sent his son, thinking, “They will respect and listen to him.” But they killed him. Jesus is telling the long sad history of God’s people rejecting the messengers God had sent to them.

Jeremiah wept for the empty harvest – for his sin-sick people who rejected the Lord’s healing power. They turned away, and now they have missed the deadline for turning back to God.

Paul is writing to Timothy to teach him the method or the gracious way to make best use of the time: Pray! 1st century society was dominated by the pagan Emperor in Rome. The Hellenistic culture had little time for the Creator God – just as the Babylonians, the Assyrians and the Egyptians before them. Paul preaches the wisdom of compliance and fervent prayer for a change of heart among the occupying Roman leaders – “kings and all who are in high positions” – in patient hope that they will encounter Messiah – the Lord Jesus Christ. Make the best use of the time we’ve been given. I can hear it now, “Well, preacher, we should shake off these unbelieving occupiers and run the country right.”

That was the message of the zealots and the Maccabees. Can we learn from the Holy Scriptures how to make the most of the time we’ve been given?

An old timer was eating his dinner in a truck stop. Three bikers sauntered in. One put out his cigarette in the man’s slice of pie and sat down at the counter. The second spit tobacco juice in his glass of milk and sat down at the counter. The third biker overturned the old man’s plate and sat down at the counter. The old man paid his tab and left. One biker winked at the waitress and said, “Not much of a man, was he?” She replied, “Not much of a truck driver either. He just backed his 18-wheeler over three motorcycles.” (jokefactory.com)

I do **not** recommend that Jesus followers take revenge on our enemies. The Lord is calling us to make the most of the worldly resources we have. Recall how non-aggressive Jesus was when He walked the earth as a man of flesh and blood.

He lived in complete obedience to His Father and dependence on God’s power. And Jesus was no wimp. Let’s camp here for a moment to consider our actual relationship to God in Christ. Do you remember your Baptism? Perhaps you were a baby when you were baptized. How could you remember it? Wherever and whenever the sacrament took place, it is the meaning of it we hold dear. *The meaning of baptism is that, just as Christ died and was buried, so the baptized (το βάπτισμα) is submerged under water. And just as Christ rose again from beneath the earth, so the baptized person rises again from beneath the water. Under the water is the believer’s old, dead, heavy, suffocating life. Out of the water, cleansed by the blood of Christ,*

(Continued on next page.)

is the believer's new, fresh, purposeful life. (crossway.com accessed 9/12/22))

At that time, some congregations give the baptized a holy medal to wear; on their wedding day newlyweds exchange rings. We keep the **covenant** in Jesus' blood as the most precious promise – the emblem of belonging to Christ and Christ belonging to us. We are dedicated to His purpose – and we are shielded by His love. His love is sovereign power exercised in grace. With this knowledge we can assess what the trucker in the little story decided to do. Did he pray? Did he allow for God's work in the bikers' lives? Just asking.

Let's look at the parable Jesus tells His disciples.

The manager has not been trustworthy with the rich man's resources. He has been found out. Even though he has been fired, he contacts the rich man's debtors. They owe commodities for the service or patronage the rich man has supplied. The dishonest steward slashes every one's bill 20 or 50%. When he gives the master the audit of his accounts it looks much better than zero. The boss likes his shrewd way of handling things. Now when he departs, he may have a place with those he has given such a good deal. He has garnered the hospitality of the master's clients.

Jesus says, "...make friends for yourselves with worldly wealth, so that when **it** gives out, you will be welcomed in the eternal home. Whoever is faithful in small matters will be faithful in large ones; whoever is dishonest in small matters will be dishonest in large ones. If then, you have not been faithful in handling worldly wealth, how can you be trusted with true wealth?" (vv 9b-11)

Spend your time here in this world being honest and generous with what you have been given. Then, when you come to the eternal home you will be warmly welcomed.

Handle worldly wealth as though it were true wealth. We are working in the marketplace of the present age, but we belong to the age to come. We are in the worldly kingdom now – but the heavenly kingdom is breaking into this worldly one. As we make the most of our time here, we show forth the glory of God – until only His eternal kingdom remains. Amen.