

Sermon - 10/02/22
Ps 137; Lam 1:1-6; 2 Tim 1:1-14; Lu 17:5-10

The Prophet Jeremiah's Book of Lamentations is a poem of sorrow and dismay at the plight of Israel. The poet paints Israel's portrait as a widow with tears on her cheeks – betrayed by those who she believed were in love with her.

We have come to perhaps the lowest point in the saga of God dealing with God's people. Then, the Psalmist is filled with reverence for the memory of Jerusalem. This poet prays for grisly revenge upon the enemies of God's people. But wait, **now**, in exile there is love and reverence for the Holy City? How many generations of Israelites bowed down to idols? From the golden calf in the Sinai to the Ashera poles on the high places of the Promised Land, again and again and again they turned their backs on the Creator God to chase after idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood. Sin in haste – repent at leisure, as my mother used to say.

Some who read of Old Testament today become angry with God for the way God deals with God's wayward people – the people God loves. Let's pause here. God's love is holy love. God's holy love is fierce and fiery. It is also gentle and nurturing. Our mortal minds and hearts cannot seem to hold these things in sync. We lose the connection. We become confused. God is not confused.

Let's go to the Torah – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy – also called the Pentateuch (five books). Index down all references to "holy." There are holy things, holy garments, holy implements, holy places. Priests are made holy by God, and by their blessing all things I mentioned become holy. But holiness is an attribute of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

Let's pause at Lev 19:2 - The Lord spoke to Moses: "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.'"

God told Moses about those who carried the holy objects from camp to camp, "But do this to them that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy *objects*: Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each of them to his work and to his load; but they shall not go in to see the holy *objects* even for a moment, or they will die." (Num 4:19-20)

What is this? To profane the holy things is to dishonor God. We post-moderns do not relate well to this attribute of God. Some of us do not show reverence for anything. By seeking God, we begin to understand that all honor and glory and adoration are due. These are the ways we spiritual creatures are created: to worship our holy God. We are to respect and live in awe of God's great love and power. We are called to love God as God first loved us. This attitude of reverence brings coherence to our lives! Balance, harmony, proportion, symmetry, unity – coherence, not confusion.

Over the centuries human understanding of God grows. We begin to learn about God and to become personally acquainted with Him. In later Psalms we find this prayer: "O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling places." (Ps 43:3)

Light and truth! The poet expresses the belief that light and truth originate from God – from God's presence which is holy. And we human creatures – made in the image of God – we start to locate God in a place called the "holy hill" – the "dwelling place of God." No map or GPS can guide us to God's dwelling place. The journey toward God is spiritual, not physical. Where you are matters less than your spiritual turning toward God and your spiritual attentiveness to what God is saying and doing in you – in your life. The disciples, sitting in the presence of Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, hear Him say, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you." (Lu 17:6)

Jesus is enlightening – bringing light and truth – into the hearts and minds of His disciples. That's you. He not only knows and loves them. He likes them. He likes you. So, He tells this simple but powerful parable about faith in God

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Later – after 50 AD Paul writes to his fellow pastor, Timothy: “... I remind you to kindle afresh (*to reignite*) the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” (2 Tim 1:6-7) Timothy is to bring light into the darkness of worldly ways – worldly thinking. To bring truth to those who struggle to understand who God is. We understand by faith.

Back in the day, a lamp or a torch supplied all the light possible with the technology available. Remember, our understanding of God and God’s ways changes – God does not change. We each allow God nearer and nearer

It would be seventeen centuries of human time until we would have the increased illuminating power of a gaslight. Suddenly city streets were bright at night. You could see your way. Safety and security! Less confusion at an intersection – or down a narrow alleyway. Humanity had a new analog for the light and truth of God’s holy presence. Did God change with the new technology? No!

Early 20th century: Electricity! Cheap, safe power for lighting up everything! The front steps – streets – the sport stadium – the parks! Our concept of spiritual light and truth expands to ever more powerful sources of light. From the light bulb to the cathode ray tube – to the dot matrix. Then, the concept of amplifying light through a pure element. The laser is born. The term “laser” originated as an acronym for “light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation,” (photonics.com)

Light that penetrates long distances of space. Light so powerful it cuts dense materials with breath taking precision. How do we perceive the light and truth of God’s presence in our time?

The Apostle Paul reminds us, “This grace was given us in Christ...before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Tim 1:9b-10)

The Light of Christ is manifested in His people – His body – the church – in you, beloved. In ways we do not fully understand: earnest prayer – faithful ministry these things allow the power of God in Christ to bring holiness into everyday things we say and do. Jesus destroys our sin. Trust and follow Him. Coherence and wholeness replace confusion and brokenness. Amen.