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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 22, 2015
1st Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Hebrews 12:14-17 Passion: Washing Disciples'
feet, Identifying the Betrayer.

Hymns: 149; 154; 652; 158:1,6 (242)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 2:17-19

Have you not brought this on yourself,
In that you have forsaken the Lord your God
When He led you in the way?

18 And now why take the road to Egypt,
To drink the waters of Sihor?

Or why take the road to Assyria,
To drink the waters of the River?

19 Your own wickedness will correct you,
And your backslidings will rebuke you.

Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing
That you have forsaken the Lord your God,

And the fear of Me is not in you,"

Says the Lord God of hosts. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Last Chance -- Final call for Repentance

For generations God had sent His prophets to Israel and Judah, warning them repeatedly of judgment to come if they did not repent. The Lord had been more than patient. The Lord had given them more than fair warning. In the northern kingdom of Israel there were periods when things weren't quite as bad, and other periods when things were worse, but they consistently maintained the worship of the golden calves which was established by Jeroboam I as soon as the northern tribes had broken away. This idolatry was a grave affront to the Lord, and over the centuries they had piled on many more transgressions, ignoring the warnings from the Lord, ignoring the voice of the prophets.

Things were very little better in the southern kingdom of Judah where a descendent of David sat upon the throne for all those hundreds of years. Some were faithful and had a heart like David's and attempted to lead the people in the way of the Lord. Others were abominably wicked so that the evil done among them surpassed the evil of the heathen nations that surrounded them. Many prophets had come and gone. Finally it came down to the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, when the Lord revealed that Judah, like Israel, had run out of time, and severe judgment was to come upon the nation, and the people would suffer horribly. The Lord rebuked the people that He had chosen to be His own, whom He had called out from the world, whom He had richly blessed with gifts both temporal and spiritual, revealing to them His grace and love. But they wanted nothing to do with the Lord. The Lord rebuked and warned His people. The Spirit speaks to us in our text of --

THEME: Responding to the LORD's Rebuke.

The people of Judah were not responding well to the words of Jeremiah. They accused Jeremiah of treason by lending support to the enemy by discouraging the people with his defeatist message. They continued to serve their false gods and attempted to blame the LORD for the trouble they were in. The LORD's response was quite straightforward:

I. Don't Blame God for Your Troubles.

We read the LORD's response in our text:

Jeremiah 2:17 Have you not brought this on yourself, In that you have forsaken the LORD your God When He led you in the way?

The LORD had always led them in the right paths, the way that would bring continued blessings. As a people they had rejected the way of the LORD, and they had forsaken the covenant they had made with Him, the covenant which stated they were to be His people and He was to be their God. They had turned to the idols of the nations surrounding them, and choose to serve these dumb idols who could neither hear, nor speak, or do anything to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. They served the false gods because they wanted to be like the world around them. Besides it appealed to the flesh, exalting their carnal desires. They even offered their sons and daughters as burnt offers to the god Molech. Without doubt they brought this judgment upon themselves because they had refused to repent and turn away from their sinful ways.

That is the warning for people yet today. We must beware that we do not conform to this world, but that we be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Yes, in the weakness of our flesh we still sin every day (Romans 12:2). Yet, we must beware that we do not start to try to analyze what sin it was that we committed that brought trouble into our lives. We live in a sinful world. So we also live in a world that is full of trouble and trouble touches each and every life at one time or another, in one way or another. Trouble often comes because we live in a world that has been corrupted by sin and that corruption touches every part of creation, so that Paul wrote of this in his epistle to the Romans.

Romans 8:19-22 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Paul speaks of the corruption that afflicts us all, as the whole creation suffers because of the ill effects of sin. But Paul also spoke of the creation existing in hope for the revealing of the sons of

God. There is hope with the Lord. That was not be forgotten, even by the people of Judah.

The rebuke did not come simply from Almighty God. It came from the **LORD**, the Covenant God, who is slow to anger and abounding in mercy and grace. He declared through Ezekiel, Jeremiah's contemporary who prophesied from exile in Babylon:

Ezekiel 33:10-11 "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?"' 11 Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

This is the same God who is Lord over all yet today. He still reaches out in longsuffering grace and tender mercy to the sinners of this world. We hear the Lord say to us through Peter;

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

This is the Lord our God, and He is mighty to save, so let us:

Isaiah 55:6-7 "Seek the Lord while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
7 Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the Lord,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.

The people of Judah refused to do this. Instead they turned to worldly powers for help. So we learn for our response to the Lord,

II. Don't Seek Deliverance from the World

Jeremiah 2:18 And now why take the road to Egypt,
To drink the waters of Sihor?
Or why take the road to Assyria,

To drink the waters of the River?

When they trusted foreign powers they just turned on them. When they tried to appease their enemies in this world it ended in catastrophe and exile. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been taken down the road to Assyria, and were never heard of again. Judah was appealing to Egypt for help, and that did not go well for them. Egypt failed them in more ways than one. They were too weak and were undependable. Judah faced destruction from Babylon because they failed to turn to the LORD for help in time of need.

Psalm 146:3-4 Do not put your trust in princes,
Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.
4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth;
In that very day his plans perish.

The most powerful men on earth are still limited by their mortality. They are little better than we are, as much as we might admire them. It may not be kings to whom we turn for help. It may be doctors or scientists. As brilliant as they may be, they know only a little more than we do. God alone knows all things including the intents of the heart, and the future that He has reserved for us. Without the Lord's blessing doctors and scientists and politicians can do very little for us. However, when the Lord uses them as His agents to bring us a blessing, **then we shall be blessed**. So why put our trust in mortals when we have the Lord on our side? **And we do have the Lord on our side!** Jesus assures us of that, for He is the High Priest who offered Himself for our redemption. He has the Father's ear. He is at the Father's right hand. Jesus cares for us in all our ways. So we read in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 4:16-17 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus opens the way to the throne of grace for us. He invites us to bring all our cares and needs to Him. He calls upon us to pray with great boldness of faith. Faith knows that the Lord hears our cry and

acts upon our petitions, as flawed as our prayers might be. Yes, as flawed as our prayers might be as we stutter and search for the right words, and words worthy of the Lord, Jesus is there and together with the Holy Spirit our prayers are presented before the throne of grace and we will obtain mercy and grace to help us in our need. Faith leads us to pray according to the Father's will, just as Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. **Jesus is the assurance that the Father cares for us.** He does not deal with us according to our sin but according to His grace, even in times of trial and tribulation.

III. God Uses Tribulation for Correction.

Our text does hold a note of hope through tribulation.

Jeremiah 2:19 ‘Your own wickedness will correct you,
And your backslidings will rebuke you.
Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing
That you have forsaken the Lord your God,
And the fear of Me is not in you,’
Says the Lord God of hosts.’

Judah was going to learn a spiritual lesson the hard way. Those who would survive the captivity in Babylon would comprehend the correction of the LORD. They would be called back from their backsliding. They would serve the LORD. Yes, they would still have issues with sin that would be addressed by the prophets in those later days of the Old Testament, but they would not again run after the false gods of the surrounding nations. They would serve the LORD. So it was that the terrible judgment that fell upon Judah also served as a deliverance from evil.

The trials and tribulations of life do correct us also. Often we find ourselves praying a whole lot more when we are confronted with a trial in life than we were before. And so we should. The Lord encourages us, **“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”** (Psalm 50:15).

And, yes, the Lord does allow trials to enter our life. That doesn't mean He is angry with us, and hates us. Indeed we are encouraged to remember that discipline comes with loving parenting, and

although the chastening seem severe the Lord abides with us in His love! We read of this in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 12:5-11 “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.’

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

God will use the trials of life to bring us closer to Him that we might trust Him for life and salvation. He will use the difficult days in this life to assure us of the certainty of the eternal life which He has secured for us through His Son, our Redeemer.

No matter how difficult the struggle and painful and long the tribulation, it cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38). In this season of Lent we focus our meditations on the sufferings of Christ. We do this knowing that He not only willingly suffered for us and our salvation, but that He endured more than we will ever know to deliver us from the suffering of hell. We do have life in His name. We do have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So in **Responding to the LORD’s Rebuke**, let us bend the knee before Him who loves us, and praise Him for the grace and mercy that He brings us always. Let us pray for Him both to deliver us, and to bless us in our time of need. The Lord shall hear our prayer, and grant us His peace.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.