

Psalm 80
Psalm 126

Read Deuteronomy 30:1-10

Jeremiah 30-33 is in many ways a commentary on Deuteronomy 30:1-10.
God had warned Moses that Israel would rebel and be driven into exile.
But that when they repented and returned to the LORD,
then he would restore the fortunes of Israel.

So listen now to the Word of God from Jeremiah 30...

Introduction: Good News for Israel and Judah (v1-4)

Let's start with the big picture.

What is Jeremiah promising?

First, he is promising return from exile – 70 years later.

Second, he is promising the coming of the Davidic King – 600 years later.

Third, he is promising the restoration of all things -
which we still anticipate.

Even though Jeremiah is speaking directly to a 6th century B.C. audience,
he is also speaking to us.

Jeremiah uses the themes of exile, sickness, and storm – among others –
as metaphors for the fundamental problems that afflict the people of God –
and indeed, all humanity.

As you experience exile – loneliness and depression –
as you experience sickness and affliction –
as you experience storms and disasters –
God's promise meets you in the midst of your troubles.

“I am with you to save you, declares the LORD.”

This season of the year we celebrate the coming of *Immanuel* -
God with us -

because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

God had promised for centuries, “I am with you to save” -
but the salvation by the judges didn't last;
the salvation by the house of David faded away.

In order for the promises of Jeremiah to be fulfilled,
we need a Son of David who never dies

In Jeremiah 30, verse 1, the LORD commands Jeremiah to write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you.

While this could be a reference to the whole book of Jeremiah, it also might refer particularly to Jeremiah 30-31.

After all, in verse 4, Jeremiah says,
“These are the words that the LORD spoke...”

Chapters 30-33 are sometimes called “The Book of Consolation” - making them especially appropriate for Advent!

And yes, Jon and I intentionally set up our preaching schedule so that we could get the good news of Jeremiah during Advent!

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. ³ For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.”

I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah.

The phrase “restore the fortunes” could also be translated
“bring back the captivity” of Israel and Judah.

It comes from Deuteronomy 30 -

though it is also used many times in the Psalms and the prophets.

The phrase “restore the fortunes” is used seven times in Jeremiah 30-33, forming a central theme in the passage.

The verb is actually the same verb we saw this morning in Ruth - “shuv” - “return.”

The basic idea of the phrase is to return captives,

but you often find this phrase used in other contexts besides exile.

In the ancient world, it was fairly common for people to be taken captive.

Because of how important return from exile was,

the phrase quickly became proverbial,

so that any “turn for the better” could become a “return from captivity.”

When bad stuff is going on – you can *feel* like you are in exile.

Alone. Abandoned. Isolated.

And so we long for God to “restore our fortunes.”

⁴ *These are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah:*

Tonight we'll be looking at three themes:

first, "salvation through judgment,"

second, how God cures the incurable wound,

and third, the restoration of the promise to Abraham (the tents of Jacob).

1. Salvation Through Judgment: The Distress of the Day of the LORD (v5-11)

a. "Can a Man Bear a Child?" The Beginning of the Labor Pains (v5-7)

⁵ *Thus says the LORD:*

*We have heard a cry of panic,
of terror, and no peace.*

Jeremiah 30-33 is also in many ways a commentary on Jeremiah 1-29!

Many of the questions that we have seen throughout the first part of Jeremiah
are now answered as the LORD promises that he will deliver his people.

The image of a woman in labor has been used in chapters 4, 6, and 13 -
but this time the picture is of a man in labor!

⁶ *Ask now, and see,*

can a man bear a child?

Why then do I see every man

with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor?

Why has every face turned pale?

⁷ *Alas! That day is so great*

there is none like it;

it is a time of distress for Jacob;

yet he shall be saved out of it.

The Day of the LORD is a time of distress.

Yes, verse 7 says that Jacob will be *saved out of it* -
but salvation only comes *through* judgment.

This was true for Judah in Jeremiah's day.

It was true for Jesus – as he had to go to the cross.

It is also true for us.

There is no way to glory except the way of the cross.

Think of Paul, how he speaks of his own travail in labor over the Galatians:

"my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth
until Christ is formed in you!" (4:19)

b. "I Will Break His Yoke" – the Triumph of David (v8-9)

⁸ *"And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke
from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of*

him.^[a] ⁹ *But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.*

Hananiah, the false prophet, had said this back in chapter 28.

Hananiah had said that God would break the yoke of Babylon *within two years*.
Jeremiah then said that *no*, it would not be 2 years, it would be 70 years.

Hananiah's error was *not* an error of content – but of timing.

It is true that God will break the yoke of Babylon!
But notice verse 9.

“They shall serve the LORD their God and David their king,
whom I will raise up for them.”

This reminds us of chapter 23 when God promised that he would restore the house of David.

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David
a righteous Branch” (23:5).

Now, the LORD of hosts – the LORD of armies –
declares that he will raise up David their king!

Many thought that Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years of exile
would coincide with Jeremiah's prophecy of the raising up of David their king.

But it didn't.

Because the breaking of the yoke of Babylon has a bigger meaning.

The yoke of Babylon refers to the power of the city of man.

Jerusalem will exchange the yoke of Babylon for the yoke of Persia,
of Greece, of Rome, of Constantinople,
of the Arabs, the Franks, the Ottomans, the English...

The yoke of Babylon is only broken when David their king is raised up from the dead.

If you would follow Jesus, do not expect an easy path.

Yes, Jesus promises that his *yoke* is easy and his *burden* light!

But that is because all other yokes are so deadly.

Jesus' yoke – the yoke of the cross – is the only yoke that leads to life!

And that is the point of verses 10-11.

c. “Fear Not...for I Am with You” – Discipline Is for Salvation (v10-11)

¹⁰ *“Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the LORD,
nor be dismayed, O Israel;
for behold, I will save you from far away,
and your offspring from the land of their captivity.
Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease,*

and none shall make him afraid.

Again we see the theme of “return from captivity”
as God promises that he will bring peace.

Remember, this is where the whole story of salvation is going:
“Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid.”

Are you living a life of quiet and ease?
No?
That means that – at least in part –
we are still dwelling in the land of our captivity.
Are you afraid?
Yes?
Well, that means that the exile isn't entirely over.

But God *has a purpose* for this!

In chapter 10, verse 24, Jeremiah speaking in the voice of Israel,
had prayed, “Discipline me, O LORD, but in justice;
not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing.”

Now 30:11 is God's answer:

*¹¹ For I am with you to save you,
declares the LORD;
I will make a full end of all the nations
among whom I scattered you,
but of you I will not make a full end.
I will discipline you in just measure,
and I will by no means leave you unpunished.*

After all, part of my problem – a very important part of my problem! -
is that *I* am not what I should be.

God's discipline is for our good.
God promises that he will make a *full end* of the wicked nations.
But he will not make a full end of his people.

I am with you *to save you*.
But in order to save us, God must discipline us.

You know what this means!
The areas of sin in your life –
God cannot allow to flourish!
Because if sin flourishes, then death wins!

So our first point has been that salvation only comes by judgment.

Which sets up our second point:

How do you cure an incurable wound?
Sin is so utterly and thoroughly bound up in the heart of man
that if the wages of sin is death,
then the only way to cure sin is to kill it -
which will also result in killing me.

2. How Do You Cure an Incurable Wound? (v12-17)

In 8:22, Jeremiah had asked,

“Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?
Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?”

And in 15:18 Jeremiah asks,

“Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?”

In verses 12-17 God answers those questions.

And he starts by a very bald statement of the problem.
The problem is that your hurt is incurable.

a. The Problem: Your Hurt Is Incurable (v12-14)

¹² *“For thus says the LORD:*

*Your hurt is incurable,
and your wound is grievous.*

¹³ *There is none to uphold your cause,
no medicine for your wound,
no healing for you.*

¹⁴ *All your lovers have forgotten you;
they care nothing for you;
for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy,
the punishment of a merciless foe,
because your guilt is great,
because your sins are flagrant.*

Why is this happening to me?

Why am I going through this misery?

God's answer is simple:

“because your guilt is great, because your sins are flagrant.”

God is not drawing a one-to-one correspondence -
he is not saying that all suffering is because of some particular sin.

But all suffering *is* because of sin!

Misery and death entered the world because of sin

God is not saying “you have cancer because you lied to your mother when you were 7.”

No!

You *do* have cancer because of sin – because sin entered the world through Adam.

And, God says, there is no medicine for your wound.

There is no healing for you.

Your guilt is great.

Your sins are flagrant.

I have dealt you the blow of an enemy.

If God is against us, who can be for us?!

And in verse 15, God repeats himself!

b. The Solution: Only God Can Restore Health (v15-17)

¹⁵ *Why do you cry out over your hurt?*

Your pain is incurable.

Because your guilt is great,

because your sins are flagrant,

I have done these things to you.

Verse 16 stands out in stark contrast to verse 15.

After emphasizing Israel's flagrant sin,

God says *therefore...*

¹⁶ *Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured,*

and all your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity;

those who plunder you shall be plundered,

and all who prey on you I will make a prey.

Wait!

God brings judgment on Israel because of Israel's sin,

therefore God will destroy their enemies?

That does not seem to follow!

But Jeremiah is teaching us the sovereignty of God's grace!

God is focusing the sin of humanity on Israel -

so that Israel might become the conduit of God's grace to the nations.

But the only path to glory is the way of the cross.

After all, if *God* is the one who has done this,

then there may be yet hope!

Jeremiah had asked in 15:5,

“Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem?”

And now the LORD answers:

*¹⁷ For I will restore health to you,
and your wounds I will heal,
declares the LORD,
because they have called you an outcast:
'It is Zion, for whom no one cares!'*

God does not have mercy on us because we deserve it!
The whole *point* of mercy is that it is *not* deserved!

God rescues the outcast – cares for the afflicted – restores health to the one who is broken.

Only God can cure the incurable.
Only God can save.

And so our third point in verses 18-22
is all about the coming restoration of the promise to Abraham.

3. The Coming Restoration of the Promise to Abraham (v18-22)

We start with land and seed.

In chapter 9, verse 19, the people wailed:
“How we are ruined! We are utterly shamed,
because we have left the land, because they have cast down our dwellings.”

Now in verse 18, the LORD replies:

*¹⁸ “Thus says the LORD:
Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob
and have compassion on his dwellings;
the city shall be rebuilt on its mound,
and the palace shall stand where it used to be.*

The Promised Land will again be inhabited.

Chapter 9, verse 21, had followed the building theme with depopulation:
“death has come up into our windows; it has entered our palaces,
cutting off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares.”

Now we hear the LORD reply in verses 19-20:

*¹⁹ Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving,
and the voices of those who celebrate.*

*I will multiply them, and they shall not be few;
I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.
²⁰ Their children shall be as they were of old,
and their congregation shall be established before me,
and I will punish all who oppress them.*

The Promised Seed will again flourish in the Land.

And in the same way that verse 18 ended the discussion of homes
with the palace of the king,
so now verse 21 concludes the theme of the seed with the King:

*²¹ Their prince shall be one of themselves;
their ruler shall come out from their midst;
I will make him draw near, and he shall approach me,
for who would dare of himself to approach me?
declares the LORD.*

Saul had offered sacrifices to the LORD –
and the Spirit of the LORD departed from him.
Uzziah had offered incense in the temple –
and the LORD struck him with leprosy.

Truly “who would dare of himself to approach me?”

God's promises to Abraham will be fulfilled –
through Israel – through David – in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the ruler who comes out from their midst -
whom God raised up and drew near, so that he ascended to his right hand in glory!
Who can ascend the hill of the LORD?
Who can dwell in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart.

Any volunteers?!
We need Jesus!

And so
*²² And you shall be my people,
and I will be your God.”*

I think that all of us would have liked it better if the passage ended there!
A beautiful reminder that God's promises through Abraham are sure and forever!

But Jeremiah has one more thing to say –
because he knows that he is speaking to people who *aren't there yet*.

And so Jeremiah urges us to “be patient.”

Conclusion: Be Patient (v23-24)

²³ *Behold the storm of the LORD!*

*Wrath has gone forth,
a whirling tempest;
it will burst upon the head of the wicked.*

²⁴ *The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he has executed and accomplished
the intentions of his mind.*

Judgment begins with the household of God, Peter says in 1 Peter 4:17.

But if it begins with us – what will become of those who do not obey the gospel?

And from Jeremiah's day to the present,
the storm of the LORD has gone forth.
The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he has executed and accomplished the intentions of his mind.

In the latter days you will understand this.

Though you *need* to keep reading at least one more verse.

Why will you understand this in the latter days?

Because “At that time, declares the LORD,
I will be the God of all the clans of Israel,
and they shall be my people.”

This repetition of verse 22 sets up chapter 31,
but it also concludes chapter 30.

Only in the latter days – only in the light of the end –
will you understand the purposes of God.

Think about it this way.

When you took your wedding vows, you did not understand everything that they meant.

Only years – or decades – later do their full meaning become clear.

That's why the vows are worded the way they are!

When John promised that he would love Barbara,
he probably did not anticipate what this last year would look like.
But sixty years ago he vowed to do what he is doing today.

Right now, I have it really easy!
But when I take my wife for granted
I am *not* preparing for the day when it will be a lot harder.

Do not wait for the “latter days” to seek to understand God's promises!
Children – do not wait until you are “grown up” to study God's word.
Read your Bibles, memorize your catechism, devote yourself to prayer.

Do not say to yourself, “I will have time later.”
Do now what the Lord Jesus calls you to do.
Because there may not be a “later.”

God's promises cannot be taken simplistically.
They continue to take on new meaning (without ever losing meaning!).
Jeremiah and his hearers may have thought that all this would take place in 70 years.
But if they did, they should have known better!

“In the latter days you will understand this.”
Jeremiah himself says that his own generation should not expect to understand
all that his prophecies mean.

And as you wrestle with the themes of Jeremiah –
as you endure exile and distress,
as you experience sin and guilt,
and as you pass through the storms and miseries of this age -
do not forget that it is the LORD who restores the fortunes of his people!

“I am with you to save you, declares the LORD.”
Cry out to Jesus!
Call upon the name of the Lord, and he will save you!