

A Command to Glory in the Knowledge of God

By Rev. Erik Guichelaar

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Grace Protestant Reformed Church

O-11225 8th Ave NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

Website: www.graceprc.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc

Jeremiah chapter 9 is the scripture reading for this evening. We depart from our series on James to have a sermon geared towards the back to Catechism season and an encouragement to make use of Bible study and we have here a fitting passage, a command to glory in the knowledge of God. So Jeremiah chapter 9, and we read the chapter in its entirety and I will be making references to different parts of the chapter in the preaching, so you will find it profitable to keep your Bibles open to Jeremiah chapter 9. This is the word of the Lord and right here in context, this is also the speaking of Jeremiah as he reflects on what's happening in Jerusalem.

1 Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! 2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. 3 And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. 4 Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. 5 And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. 6 Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD. 7 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? 8 Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait. 9 Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 10 For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone. 11 And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons

Or a den perhaps of jackals, a den of coyotes or wolves, or perhaps a den of snakes but usually that word dragons has the idea of coyotes. It's pretty much the same word in Hebrew, dragons or jackals.

and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant. 12 Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? 13 And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; 14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: 15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. 16 I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them. 17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come: 18 And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. 19 For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled [how are we ruined]! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out. 20 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation. 21 For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. 22 Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them. 23 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. 25 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; 26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

The text is verses 23 and 24,

23 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what is above all things precious? The 10th graders and the 11th graders will recognize that question because that is the very first question of the Essentials Booklet, and they had to learn it for this past Monday and you're going to have to learn it again for tomorrow night. I hope you remember. What is above all things precious? Answer: the knowledge of the true God through Jesus Christ whom he has sent, Jeremiah 9 verses 23 and 24, and you'll notice that the proof text given in that answer is the text for the sermon this evening.

What is above all things precious? Answer: the knowledge of the true God through Jesus Christ whom he has sent. Is that true? I mean, is that true for you personally? It is objectively true but is this your own attitude, that this is the one thing above all else that is precious in your life? Do you glory in knowing God? In the priorities we make, in the schedules we keep, in the amount of time we spend in God's word, in our church attendance from week to week, in our attitude towards Catechism work, the memory work, are we reflecting the attitude that this one thing, understanding and knowing God, is most precious in our whole lives?

A few weeks ago we had a sermon from James chapter 1 that focused on wisdom and we kind of used that sermon as a back to school sermon. We outlined what wisdom is and we emphasized to the students at school that this is what you're doing at school. You're growing in wisdom. That's the goal that you might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Well this evening we have a sermon that's not a back to school sermon but we might say a back to Catechism sermon or a back to Bible study sermon, and we use this sermon as an encouragement for the Catechism students so that you might be orientated in the right perspective when it comes to all the work that you're doing, as well as your parents, as they help you with your memory work. And we use this sermon tonight as an encouragement for adults to do Bible study this year and to be, simply to be in the word because this is above all things precious, the knowledge of the true God through Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

We take as our theme this evening, "A Command to Glory in the Knowledge of God." A command to glory in the knowledge of God. We look at that theme under three points. First, we see that this is a needed command; second, we will see that this is a glorious command; and then third, we will also see that this is a compassionate command.

These words of the text are well-known words, Jeremiah 9 verses 23 and 24, but the setting in which we find these words are perhaps less well-known and that's where we will begin, the setting. The words of the text come at the end of a chapter that is filled with warnings of divine judgment. In fact, it's not just the chapter, but it's the entire

section, and it's really pretty much the whole book of Jeremiah. Chapter after chapter, verse by verse, God tells his people about the judgment that is going to come upon them. At this time in her history, Judah is heading straight for the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah lives through the whole experience of being brought into Babylonian captivity, although he stays behind while his contemporary Ezekiel is taken into captivity. The people are going to be plucked out of the land and sent into exile in Babylon. The Babylonians are going to wreak havoc and destruction upon the entire land, and they are going to be the instrument of God to judge and chasten God's people.

Judgment is the dominant note in the book of Jeremiah and that word of judgment is clearly heard in this chapter. We can look at a few verses right from the middle of the chapter. It starts really with verses 9 and 10, and even before that, but notice verses 9 and 10, "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone." And he's talking there about the land of Canaan. This was the land that had been flowing with milk and honey. When God gave this land to the people, it was full of bounty. God gave this land to be a blessing to the people and now it's going to be a waste howling wilderness, desolate and empty. So that in verse 11 we read, "And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons," or a den of coyotes, "and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant." All these descriptions are descriptions of God's curse falling upon the people. In verse 16, we read, "I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known," far off among the heathen, "and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them."

These are all prophecies of what the Babylonians will do to Judah and then in verse 17, God speaks very forcefully to the people, very strikingly. He says, "call for the mourning women, that they may come." Maybe you children know back in those days there were professional mourners, women who were hired out to cry and to weep for the dead and God says, "Let them come because I'm going to visit this land with death and there will be plenty of job opportunities for professional wailing women." If you skip down to verse 21, you find very graphic language. Verse 21, "For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from outside, and the young men from the streets." Death here in this verse is personified as a stealthy assassin who is slipping into the houses through the windows, the open windows, and who kills the children who are safely sleeping in their beds. Or perhaps you can picture it this way, picture death here as a cloud, a dark cloud that passes through the land, passes through the city streets. It wafts into the houses through the windows and it chokes the children while they are sleeping. That's the imagery here. In verse 22, there is more, "Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman," as the grain that falls behind the harvesters, "and none shall gather those dead carcasses." Utter desolation, so that no one is even left to bury the dead.

And why all these horrible things? Why all this death and carnage? Well, the answer is not hard to find. It's the result of the sin of the people. The sin of the people is vividly described in the first half of the chapter. These people were a crooked and perverted people. What had they done? The question is not really what had they done, the question is more, what had they not done? They had done everything, they were so wicked. Verse 2, "Oh that I had in the wilderness," that I might have in the desert, "a lodging place that traveling men use; that I might get out of here, that I might leave my people and go from them, because they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." And then in the following verses, the prophet explains they are liars. They go from evil to evil. They are idol worshipers. They are child sacrifices. They are greedy. You name it, they had done it. Prostitution, racism, friendship with the world, murder, false preaching, rejecting the word of the Lord, despising the sacraments, corrupt dealings, taking advantage of the poor and the vulnerable. And in a nutshell, what was their sin? Their sin was this: arrogance, haughtiness, pride. It was their self-love, their self-centeredness, their narcissism that moved them to do all these things. Open rebellion against God and despising of his prophets. In verses 13 and 14, this is what God says, "And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them."

Their sin was rebellion and pride, hatred of God and, beloved, that's where we begin to actually unfold the text for this evening because that's exactly what God is talking about in verse 23. "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." And he says that because that's exactly what this ilk of people were doing. That's exactly why they were behaving the way that they were, because they were so full of stinking pride. They were wise, or so they thought, and they boasted in their wisdom. They were mighty, or so they thought, and they boasted in their might. They were rich, or so they thought, and they boasted in their riches. They were wise, they thought, exactly because they thought they knew better than God.

The wisdom they had wasn't true wisdom. It wasn't the wisdom that comes from above, that is righteous and peaceable. It was wisdom that comes from below. It was the wisdom of being able to make smart business deals and political alliances with Egypt and Assyria against Babylon. That was the circumstance here. Babylon was the world empire. Babylon was someone to pay attention to, for sure. But Judah didn't have to worry about anything and she certainly didn't have to listen to what Jeremiah was saying about Babylon and God's judgment. She didn't have to worry about the future. No, because she had the foresight and the wisdom to make alliances with Assyria and with Egypt against Babylon. That was her wisdom. She knew better than God. She was secure. But the day was fast approaching when Judah would suddenly have to come to terms with just how worthless all her wisdom was. All her wisdom would fail her. Her political alliances, her smartness with these deals wouldn't mean anything because God's word would come to pass.

Not only did the people think that they were wise, they thought they were pretty mighty, and the reference here is to physical power, especially the physical power of a well-trained army or military. Judah thought she was strong. "Look at all our chariots and horses. Look at the strength of our allies, Egypt and Assyria." And Judah even had this perverted way of thinking, that since she was God's people, God would protect her from her enemy no matter what. No matter how much they rejected him, no matter how much they walked in secret, impenitent sin, mistreating even God's own people, they were strong because, "Well, look what we have right here in Jerusalem. The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these, they said and they thought," simply because they had the temple that they would be safe. It's like Israel back in the days of Samuel, bringing the ark into battle against the Philistines because, "Well, we've got the Lord with us." They thought they were mighty. To quote from the book of Micah, which is around the same time period, a little earlier, they said to themselves, "Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us." That was her strength, so she thought, but the day was fast approaching when Judah would suddenly have to come to terms with just how utterly weak she was. Her strength would fail her. How can she defend herself when it is her own God, God himself, who would use the Babylonians as an instrument in his hand to chasten his people?

Not only did the people think that they were wise, not only did they think that they were mighty, they thought they were rich and that too was a source of comfort for Judah, because if wisdom failed her and might failed her, "Well, we have money. We can always buy off the Babylonians, give them tribute money. That would keep us safe." But soon all her riches would be stripped from her, and she would be reduced to rubble. All her riches would fail her.

Her wisdom would fail her. Her might would fail her. Her riches would fail her. And now we should look at all of it in terms of Judah's great sin and God's great judgment that was going to come against her. Judah thought she could press on in this wicked behavior that characterized her. She thought she could sin without any consequences, without any punishment because she was wise. She was mighty. She was rich. And God says, "But I am coming in judgment. Your sins have gone on long enough and my soul will be avenged on such a nation as this that walks in sin and blasphemes my holy name, even as they call themselves my people." Your wisdom cannot stand in the day of judgment. Your might cannot stand in the day of judgment. Your riches cannot stand in the day of judgment. And so we read in the text, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." And that's the background also for the command that follows, "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who executes lovingkindness, justice and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD." This was a needed command.

This is a needed command for today as well because the circumstances today are not much different than they were in the days of Judah. How inclined we are also to boast in our wisdom and in our might and in our riches. We often think we are so wise. We know so much today. As far as the world, science and technology has come so far, we often

glory in it. Or we can boast in our retirement plans, our insurance coverage. "No matter what happens, I've got my bases covered. I have forethought. I am wise." We've got everything planned out but the wisdom of men fails. The wisdom of men cannot keep the day of judgment from coming. The wisdom of men is utter folly before the wisdom of God. The wisdom of men fails.

Just as we often think we are so wise, we often think we are so mighty. We're healthy and we're strong, "Nothing can knock me down," so we think. And then so quickly, we learn that the strength of men fails. We get old so quickly. We wake up and we are tired and we say, "Is this what getting old is all about? I get weaker and weaker." Even in the moment, we catch a tiny bug, a little infection and we are knocked down. Don't put your confidence in the strength of men or your own strength. The strength of men will fail.

And just as we often think we are wise and we are mighty, so we often think we are rich. That's what the whole world pursues, isn't it? That's what the world loves. That's what the world talks about. That's what consumes our conversations, how to make money, riches. And then continually, the people of the world compare themselves with each other according to this standard, "How rich are they compared to me?" And they glory in their riches. But the riches of men fail. Here today, gone tomorrow. Don't put your trust in riches.

In the end, all these things mean nothing. For Judah, certainly, all these things mean nothing, and it's no different today, and yet how distracted we can be with these things, with our schedules, with our priorities, with our attitudes. We often boast in the importance of worldly wisdom, or human power, or industry and work ethic, or earthly riches, and God says, "Whoa, keep the right perspective." At the beginning of another Catechism season, at the beginning of another Bible study season, at the beginning of another busy season, don't glory in your wisdom, don't glory in your power, don't glory in your riches.

The command God gives here is certainly a needed command but at the same time, this command is a glorious command and it's a glorious command because the point God is making is this, as he goes on in verse 24, "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight." And you can hear the contrast there too. All these people of Judah delighting not in lovingkindness, not delighting in justice, not delighting in righteousness and God says, "But these are the things I delight in. For in these things I delight, saith the LORD." This is what we are to be glorying in, that we understand and know God. And the word glory means to boast in. We don't boast in our wisdom. We don't boast in our might or a power. Everything that we have been given, we have received anyway, it's all of God. But we boast in this, that we understand and know God. That's what God commands us to boast in. It's a right and proper thing, an act of obedience to boast in this, that I understand and I know God. To boast in God has his approval and blessing.

Who is this God in whom we are to boast? Well, first of all, he is certainly the God who executes vengeance and judgment in the earth, that's already been emphasized throughout this chapter. God will avenge himself on these people but that's already been emphasized. That's not where God is going. Where God is going is a very glorious place. Verse 24. Who is this God? First of all, he's the LORD, capital letters. He is Jehovah. The "I am that I am." He is the Lord who changes not. He remembers his promises. He keeps his promises. And therefore, his people will not be consumed. "I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." And then second of all, closely connected to that, he is the Lord who, and this is who he is as Lord, he executes lovingkindness and justice and righteousness in the earth, and these are the things he delights in. That's who he is.

Lovingkindness, first of all, that's God's steadfast, unchanging, enduring covenant love. It is his mercy and compassion. It is his undying devotion and loyal friendship to his people. Lovingkindness. It refers to his desire to make happy and make blessed. God exercises mercy and covenant love towards his people and that means he looks upon his people and he sees them for who they truly are. Not wise, but foolish. Not mighty, but weak. Not rich, but poor. And seeing them, his people, in their misery, he does not turn away from them, but instead he has tender compassion for them. And that compassion is more than just a feeling, he also exercises his compassion to deliver his people from that foolishness, from that weakness, and from that poverty. He does these things, and these are the things that he delights in. This is why he does it, because this is who he is as God. That's his lovingkindness, a very common word throughout scripture.

Judgment, second of all, is God's rule. It refers to his rule of justice, or we could use simply the word justice. God does not rule unjustly. He rules justly. He is the God who does not let wickedness go unpunished. He is not the God who is a respecter of persons, who takes bribes, who takes advantage of the weak in order to give to the rich and the strong. No, he is the God who does not let wickedness go unpunished, and he is the God who does not let righteousness go unrewarded. He is the God who condemns the wicked and punishes them with eternal judgment and he is the God who vindicates the righteous and rewards them with pleasures forevermore. He is the God who will give justice and protection to all the oppressed in the land, all the afflicted, all the ones who are taken advantage of as they are striving to walk honestly in the fear of the Lord. He does these things and these are the things he delights in and his wrath falls upon those who do not do these things. That's judgment.

And then third, righteousness is very similar. Righteous is moral perfection. He is perfectly upright in everything he does, punishing the guilty, delivering the helpless, and protecting the vulnerable. He delivers and protects the innocent and righteous. He does these things. You can be sure of it.

These are the things he delights in. He exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, and when you look at the cross of Jesus Christ, that's where you see it all come together. That's exactly who God is and what he's showing about himself. In the whole of history and what he does with Christ, we see all three come

together, his lovingkindness, his justice, and his righteousness for in the cross of Jesus Christ you see the lovingkindness of God as he looks down upon his people in love and mercy and compassion and he is willing their salvation. And then he exercises himself in all his attributes so that he accomplishes their salvation and he imparts unto them that salvation through the sending of his Son, he himself coming in our flesh, taking our sins upon his own shoulders, going the shameful and bitter way of the cross for us. He was made poor so that we might indeed be made rich. He was made foolish in the eyes of the world so that we might be given the wisdom of God. He was the one who became weak, that we might receive strength from on high. That's the lovingkindness of God, his faithfulness to his people. In the cross of Jesus Christ, we see the God of judgment, who while showing mercy to his people, also maintains his justice by visiting every one of our sins upon the head of his own Son. He does not let wickedness go unpunished and yet at the same time imputing Jesus' righteousness to his people, he also judges his people as innocent and pleasing in his sight. He is a just God in every way and on the day of judgment, we will all see just how perfectly just he is. In the cross of Jesus Christ, we see the God of righteousness supplying unto his people a perfect righteousness, his own righteousness so that we can be clothed with righteousness even as he is righteous.

This is the glorious God of heaven and earth. This is the Maker and these are precisely the things that everyone should be boasting in, in a sense, properly understood. The Maker of heaven and earth is a God of lovingkindness and mercy and justice and righteousness. He's a glorious God. But there's more because God says, "Don't just glory in me, glory in this, that you understand and know me." And to know God, that's using covenantal language. I emphasized that to the Essentials students this past week. This is not just knowing about God, this is knowing God himself, similar to how Adam knew Eve and how Adam and Eve knew God in the garden, and they walked with him, and they talked with him, and they enjoyed friendship and fellowship. That's what it means to know God and that's how we study the doctrines of scripture in Essentials class and in all Catechism classes. We study in Catechism as those who are God's children who know God and who want to know him more. That's what Catechism is all about. We know God and we want to know him more intimately and deeply. We want to walk with him more deliberately and talk with him more fully and appropriately with understanding and live for him.

To know God is to know God's lovingkindness personally, so that I know God has mercy and love towards me. He has loyal friendship towards me. No matter how great my sins are, he is the Lord, my covenant God. I have an everlasting covenant of grace with him. That's not a license to sin. No, that's all the more reason to put away my sin. To know God is to know God's justice personally. He hears my cries when I call out to him for help, "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil." And then God rises up and he defends me and he destroys the wicked who plot against me and who turn their faces away from me. To know God is to know God's righteousness personally. He has clothed me with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And I also know that God's dealings with me in Jesus Christ are very merciful and at the same time just and he is righteous in all his dealings with me. It's this knowledge that you have been given through faith which Christ purchased for you on the cross and imparted unto you by his Holy Spirit, it is this

knowledge that we are commanded to boast in. "I know the Maker of heaven and earth and he is Jehovah, my covenant God. He loves me. He cares for me. He protects me. He leads me. He will be with me. He is my God and I am his child." I boast in this and I rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I rejoice in the Lord.

To boast in knowing God is to boast in Jesus Christ, because it's only in Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ, that I am able to know God, right? What is above all things precious? The knowledge of the true God through Jesus Christ. That's how we know him, through Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. To boast in knowing God is to boast that this is God's dealing with me, that I should know him, and even this knowledge of God that I have, this understanding, this personal relationship with God is only because of his goodness and his grace to me. He has plucked me as a brand from the fire, from the kingdom of darkness, bringing me into his everlasting kingdom of glory. And I know him. And I know him because he first knew me. He foreknew me. He loved me in eternity in Jesus Christ as his elect child. And he, as my God, my covenant God and friend, will exercise his lovingkindness, his judgment, and his righteousness on behalf of me and my good. Why? Because these are the things that he delights in. These are the things he delights in.

And what's the point of all of this? The point is this, God is again saying, "Don't trust in your worldly wisdom, don't trust in your earthly might, don't trust in your physical riches to give you that bountiful life, to see you through the dark days ahead, to protect you from the enemy. All those things will prove to be vain and empty things. Look to me! Look to me, I am the one you can depend on in the day of distress. I am the one who will be your strong tower, your refuge and strength, your very present help in trouble. All those things will fail you, but I will never fail you." That's what he's saying in this passage. And so in the final analysis, this needed commandment, which is also a glorious commandment, also needs to be seen as a very compassionate commandment. God is expressing compassion on his people.

First of all, God is speaking here to all of Judah, the whole nation, and he is commanding Judah as a nation, as his bride, to repent of her sin, to forsake her sinful ways and return unto him. He's speaking unto Judah and exhorting her with strong exhortations to turn from her deception and iniquity. To use the language of Ezekiel, the contemporary of Jeremiah, it is as if God is saying this, "I do not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. I do not take pleasure in seeing my Judah, my covenant people walking in sin and being destroyed in sin. Repent and return unto your God, O people of Judah."

That, first of all, is what he is saying in this passage but second, he's also speaking to the remnant within the nation of Judah, to those who are dwelling in the midst of a wicked land, and yet they are still looking to the Lord and still trusting in him, that remnant according to the election of grace. Maybe they were the very ones that are being taken advantage of by others in their own land. Maybe they are the ones whom the others in the land were judging to be foolish, judging to be weak, judging to be poor. Maybe they were the ones made poor by the wicked deception and craftiness of others in their own land and God looks to them and he gives them this command in their own hearing. It's as if

God sees his people over here and then he turns to the whole nation and he says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." He says that to the whole nation and then, as it were, he turns to his remnant, his people and his eye upon them with mercy and compassion, he says, "But let him that glorieth glory in this," you that glory, glory in this, "that you understand and know me, that I am the LORD which exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight. You can be sure of it, my people. These are the things I delight in." And it's as if God says to the remnant and says, "I am the God of lovingkindness. You know me, and I know you. I am your friend and your Savior. Be comforted. Even as you hear all this judgment from the prophet Jeremiah, you hear all these scary things about the land being desolate and Judah being made a den of dragons, nevertheless, Judah, my Judah, shall be redeemed. Judah shall be redeemed through judgment for I am the Lord, I change not. Be still. Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen."

It's a deep and it's a beautiful passage of scripture. It is a compassionate command God gives to his people. And now dwelling on this passage and appreciating what this passage is, as we come to the end of the sermon, the question must be faced that we brought up in the introduction, what is above all things precious to you? Practically, tangibly, even as you can measure it in your own life, what is above all things precious? The knowledge of the true God through Jesus Christ whom he has sent. That is true. That's very much true. Let's make it personal. Is that what I'm saying from the bottom of my heart? In these days, very similar to the days of Jeremiah, is that what I am saying in the bottom of my heart and is that how I live? The Maker of heaven and earth, who is my own Savior and Redeemer, who is my Lord and my God and my friend, to know him, to know him, to walk with him, to talk with him, to have a relationship of love with the Maker of heaven and earth, and this is my reality as a speck of dust and a sinner besides? Oh yes, this is above all things precious. Jesus Christ, the Savior of the church, the one clothed with perfect righteousness before whom when John saw him, he bowed and trembled as if he were a dead man, the one who is beautiful in every part of his being, the one in whom all my sins are forgiven and whose love and friendship are more than life to me, I know him. And I understand him. And I have him as my very own possession. My friend and my Lord, he shares his secrets with me. And even though I can't see him in the flesh yet, he shares his plans with me and I know that he walks with me and he talks with me, and he gives me his Spirit to lead me and guide me, and to know this is above all things precious. This is something that you as Essentials students memorized with the proof text, Jeremiah 9 verses 23 and 24. Is this what lives in our hearts?

Then what is the result? The result is first we strive to put away our sins, and we strive to reflect God's lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness in our own lives because these are the things your God delights in. You know it. This is who God is and I love him and I love his attributes. And the result is second, you have a hunger and a thirst to grow deeper and more intimate in your understanding and knowledge of God. It's true for the child of God. How can it not be true? "I want to know you more God. This is eternal life. This is life already now to know you and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Isn't that how it is? You want to spend time in his word. You do. You crave opportunities to be in

God's word. I think of Mary and Martha right now, right? Martha busy in the kitchen, even upset that Mary's sitting at the feet of Jesus. But that's really what Martha wanted to. She just felt the duty to be busy but Mary has chosen the better thing, right? You want to spend time in his word. You want to be in church, hearing God's word, and you're restless when you can't. Isn't that our experience? "This isn't right. I don't like this. I want to be in church." This isn't just going through the motions. Catechism class, Bible study, this isn't just going through the motions. This isn't just head knowledge that we can argue better with others or we can make sure other people are doctrinally sound. No, I want to know God more. I want to know him more deeply. And how do I come to know him more? By spending time with him in his word.

Children, this is ultimately why your parents want you to go to Catechism class, this is why your parents make you go to young people's Bible study, because they love you, and because they understand themselves what it is to understand and know God, and they want you to grow in your understanding and knowledge of God too. Your parents are not boasting in human wisdom or in earthly power or earthly riches. Their boast is that they know God. That's their joy. Ask them about it. They even make you go to young people's because they know, "This is an opportunity for my child to grow in his knowledge of God, and while this child is under my house, and while this child is still not entirely mature enough to govern his own life or her own life, I will do what I can to bless this child and help him or her grow in his or her knowledge of God." And if you're lacking in your knowledge of God, and maybe that's why you haven't made confession of faith, because you're just not ready yet, pursue growing in the knowledge of God. Pursue it.

Children, your parents know what the Essentials students have memorized, the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, that is above all things precious. And your parents have no greater delight than to hear that their children are walking in the truth. So be encouraged, children. It's hard work, sometimes, Catechism work. Be diligent in your work and Bible study. And adults, they learned from their fathers how to worship Balaam. What are our children learning from us? Just a simple word, adults model for the children what it means to glory in the knowledge of God because if they don't see you glorying in it, why should they boast in it? Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we do boast in this, that we understand and know thee and thou art an awesome God in all thy attributes. Give us to know thee more, Lord, and give us to be diligent and faithful in the day and age in which we live to make use of what thou has given us, a Bible in our own homes and families, and manifold opportunities with our friendships and in the midst of the church to grow in grace and the knowledge of thee. Bless this preaching. Use it by thy Spirit to quicken within us this kind of boasting and the yearning more and more to grow in our relationship with thee. To thee be the glory, Lord. Bless us in thy lovingkindness. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.