*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 3 - 8

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, June 3 Jeremiah 5:1-17**

*“Lord, you are searching for honesty”*

In an interchange between God and the audience in Jerusalem, mediated by the prophet, who offers commentary in verses 3-6, God challenges the people to search Jerusalem for anyone who deals honestly and seeks the truth. One can also translate “deals honestly” as “does justice.” Apparently no one fits these requirements. Jeremiah himself attempts a search of people, both the poor and great, but their sins are many.

Beginning in verse 10, Jerusalem is personified as the possessor of vines and branches, which symbolize people. Not only have both Israel and Judah refused to accept that their current misfortune is the Lord’s judgment on them; there is even a sense among some that the Lord is not active and will not judge in the future either. Apparently these sentiments are provoked by so-called prophets who are nothing but windbags, telling the people what they want to hear rather than the true word of God. But, God *will* judge, declaring that a foreign nation is coming to devastate Judah, resulting in the carrying away of the people into exile.

*We will heed your word, Lord, for you deal honestly with us. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 4 Jeremiah 5:18-31**

*“Eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear”*

Although the people of Judah will be exiled from the Promised Land, it will not bring an end to their existence. In context, that is good news. Further, the Exile in Babylon is reinforced as a just reward for forsaking the God of their ancestors in order to serve foreign gods while in their own land. Now they will serve foreigners in a foreign land.

Jeremiah portrays the people as sense-less, describing them as possessing eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear the judgment of God. Jeremiah continues by noting that they refuse to fear the Lord; that is, they do not hold the Lord in awe and serve him with reverence, as is befitting a holy and righteous God, who has always blessed them with regular crops and rain. He then underscores the correspondence between act and consequence: their sins have deprived them of good; they are experiencing a general breakdown of common decency as they neglect their responsibility to be obedient to God’s commandments; greed and violence are rampant; justice and righteousness practically non-existent.

*My eyes and ears are open to you, Lord, that I may not be deprived of good. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 5 Jeremiah 6:1-30**

*“Listen to this warning”*

Disaster is imminent for Judah and Jerusalem. The city is “the Daughter of Zion,” so beautiful and yet so tragic. A siege of the city is depicted along with a succinct statement of the reason: “This city must be punished, for it is filled with oppression.” But, Jeremiah’s announcements about the coming judgment have fallen on deaf ears. Speaking for himself and God, he wonders to whom else can he speak? He confesses that he is wearied at holding in God’s wrath, and he hears the command to pour it out on the city that has known no shame.

Through his prophet, the Lord asks the people to consider the “good way,” that “ancient path,” that leads to security. The prophet represents God in the conversation, but the people rudely reject divine guidance. The fate to befall them is actually the fruit of their own schemes. Correspondingly, God rejects the sacrifices of the people as inadequate in light of their moral and spiritual disobedience. Through his prophet, he declares that the people as a whole are corrupt.

*I have heard your warning, Lord, and I confess my sin. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 3 - 8

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, June 6 Jeremiah 7:1-29**

*“The temple of the Lord!”*

Jeremiah warns worshippers not to trust in deceptive words that given them false hopes concerning the security of the temple or the efficacy of their religious activities. Three times the phrase “the temple of the Lord” is repeated in verse 4. It seems to function like a mantra, as if simply repeating it or even asserting it makes it true. Just because the temple sits in Jerusalem, worshippers should not assume that they can fail in their responsibilities to God and neighbor and then come to the temple and cry, “We are safe!”

Jeremiah does not deny that the majestic temple on Mount Zion belongs to the Lord. Speaking for God, however, he asserts that the Lord is not bound to preserve the temple at all costs in the face of the people’s flagrant disobedience. There was nothing magical about the temple with respect to divine presence. The claim that God’s Name dwelt there was a metaphorical way of saying that God could be personally encountered at that site. At the same time, God has not tied himself to the structure or somehow bound himself irrevocably to its fate.

*I will not hope in any religious institution, Lord, but only in you. Amen.*

**Friday, June 7 Jeremiah 7:30 – 8:3**

*“I have never commanded such a horrible deed”*

In the nearby valley of Topheth, the Judeans participated in the horrifying rites of child sacrifice. The ancient world considered the offering of a child to a deity as a supremely religious act, since it gave to the deity what was most precious to the worshiper. Some Judeans must have believed that they were appeasing the Lord by partaking in these rituals, since God protests through the prophet that he has not commanded such activities. Elsewhere these activities are associated with the worship of the gods Baal and Molech.

As we consider the ministry of Christ, the Topheth sacrifices remind us that what God did not require of his people he provided in the death of his own Son. If the Topheth sacrifices gave occasion for God’s insistence that he does not require the sacrifice of children either to please or appease him, then the death of Jesus Christ is the occasion where God reveals the supremely sacrificial act of a self-offering for sin. In the death of Jesus, Christians meet God’s own zeal to judge sin and his ardent desire to provide life for sinners.

*In Christ I am forgiven, Lord, without the need for any other sacrifice. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 8 Jeremiah 8:4-22**

*“Is anyone sorry for doing wrong?”*

The prophet engages his hearers with rhetorical questions and accuses them of moral stupidity and spiritual dullness. He states that God has listened attentively, but they do not say what is right. Neither do they do what is right. They are woefully and willfully ignorant of God’s requirements of behavior, which are designed to regulate life. Even a stork knows that there are appointed seasons, yet God’s own people seem clueless. To the reply from the people that they are indeed wise and have the law of the Lord, Jeremiah charges that their interpretation of God’s law is false as it blunts the law’s judgmental force against sin.

The people belatedly realize that God’s judgment is upon them. Jeremiah depicts them as coming to the sudden and terrifying realization that the enemy is approaching and that God is in the process of judging them for their transgressions. The reference to poisoned water likely refers to the problems with water stored in cisterns rather than to some form of divine action in actually poisoning wells. Sieges typically resulted in heavy reliance on poor resources stored in cisterns.

*I am sorry for doing wrong, Lord, and I confess my sin before you. Amen.*