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Who is faithful? - Jeremiah 2

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“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matt 12:34) Jesus said that! What do you talk about the most? What is it that you often find your conversations moving toward? It seems to me that the things that we talk about the most are the things that are either our greatest worry and concern, or our greatest love; what we’re most anxious about, or what we’re passionate about. So, what do you talk about? Where is your heart?

As we study the book of Jeremiah, I think we’re going to discover both, God’s greatest love, and His greatest concern. He is passionate about His people; He loves them, and He is most concerned about their failure to love, follow and serve Him. He loves the people and wants the best for them, but He hates to see their destructive and empty pursuit of false gods. In 45 of 52 chapters, we see that God’s greatest concern is their idolatry; their love for and seeking after idols.

This morning we look at chapter 2 and this is the first prophetic message that Jeremiah brings to the people. And its basic message is a call to “wake up; based upon cause and effect. If you do this then this will be the result. If you pour boiling water on your hand then you will receive a scolding burn. If you don’t plant the seed, then you won’t receive a harvest. If you love and serve other idols before me, then you can wait for them to bless and serve you. And God is saying through Jeremiah, “wake up!” Because you have done this, then there will be consequences; every cause has an effect.

So, what do you talk about most? Is it that which you are most anxious about, or that which you love the most? Is it time to wake up, to what is the abundance of your heart?

In the call of God to Jeremiah, twice God says to young, fearful and anxious Jeremiah, “I will rescue you.” “The kings, the priests, the people will fight against you because of my message, but I am with you and will rescue you.” Because you will challenge the people and bring them under conviction, guilt and shame, the effect will be that you will be rejected and thrown into prison and beaten, but I am with you and will rescue you. Because the people have rejected me, the effect is that I am sending you to them, and if they do not listen then they will be driven into exile. So plead with them to wake up to themselves.

Billy Graham said, “The Christian who expects to escape life’s difficulties has an unrealistic attitude and has failed to understand the Bible or the history of the church.” When we stand up for the Lord and what is right, we can expect trouble from a world that rejects our message, but God is with us and will rescue us. And when God convicts us of sin and the need to repent, to wake up, then the effects or consequences will be to our detriment if we reject His appeal.

So, let’s look at chapter 2. V.1, **“The word of the Lord came to me: “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: “This is what the Lord says: “I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest, all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them,” declares the Lord.**

God remembers how faithful and devoted the people were to Him when He first brought them out of Egypt. And in doing so, He wants them to think back and remember their devotion to Him too. Do you recall your devotion to the Lord when you first came to Him; when you first came to appreciate that Jesus died to save you from your sin and eternal punishment? Do you recall how, you too were devoted to the Lord and couldn’t get enough of His Word; you enjoyed your special moments with Him; like a bride you loved Him and vowed that you would do whatever he asked, and go wherever He led?

For some of you, the years have gone by and the relationship has matured and you no longer need the excitement and youthful passion, but you remain close to the Lord, faithfully devoted to the Him. For some of you perhaps, your devotion and obedience has waned, and when you do sense the prompting of the Lord, you make excuses and rationalise away your sin, and spend little time with God and in His Word and prayer. You are less devoted and willing than you once were.

○ V.4, **“Hear the word of the Lord, you descendants of Jacob, all you clans of Israel. This is what the Lord says: “What fault did your ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. ○ They did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord, who brought us up out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness, through a land of deserts and ravines, a land of drought and utter darkness, a land where no one travels and no one lives? I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce.’”**

God points out that He has always remained faithful. ○ Although their leaders in years gone by could not find any fault in Him, they strayed far, far from God and His ways. He brought them through the dessert, providing for them in a place where no one lives because it is inhabitable, and then into a rich and fertile land – the Promised Land.

Hasn't God always been faithful for you? As you look back you might perceive that you too have lived through some difficult days; some dark days; some days where you didn't know where the Lord was taking you; days of struggle through marriage breakup, financial battles, business failures; dark days of sickness needing years of medical treatment for some of you; but God has been with you and remained faithful! He has rescued you, and He is bringing you in, to fertile land.

○ I think that God allows the dark days; the days of wandering in the dessert; and struggling through days of drought, to test our faith in Him and strengthen our dependence upon Him. We however, tend to reject the dark days; desiring that all goes well for us; and we often see the dark days as God abandoning us. He wants us to draw even closer to Him, and be drawn back to our first love; spending greater time with Him and depending upon Him more.

But for some of us, like the Hebrew people, although God had always remained faithful to His people, they rejected Him. ○ V. 13, **“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”** V.11, **“Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols.”**

V.7b, **“But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable. The priests did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord?’ Those who deal with the law did not know me; the leaders rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols.”**

Have you committed the same two sins? Have you forsaken God? And are you chasing after other god's in the pursuit of life fulfilment, satisfaction and meaning?

God describes Himself as “the spring of living water.” He's not a stagnant, pond of murky sludge; He is the spring of living water. So satisfying and essential to life. Jesus said to the woman at the well, ○ **“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”** (Jn 4:13-14) ○ God is the spring of living water, and as we drink in Him, His life wells up inside of us finding its fulfilment in eternal life.

He's the One through whom living waters flow. That means He has what will satisfy our souls and quench our spiritual thirst, and give us life in all of its fulness now and into eternity.

But for the Hebrew people, their first sin was in forsaking God. Initially, they wanted more; initially they didn't reject God outright, they just started adding other gods; they went looking for more; they saw what other nations pursued and Satan led them to think that they were missing out.

And for us, Satan will lead us into thinking that somehow God is not all that we need and we're missing out; we want more. And in our current environment of consumerism where we expect that our wants and demands should be met, then we can become dissatisfied with God and with the church. God however, still wants to meet with us through His Word, and longs for us to pursue a personal intimate relationship with Him. We need to be careful that we're not being misled by Satan. By pursuing more of God, we will never miss out.

And so, for the Hebrew people their second sin was in making their own source of water in cisterns that wouldn't and couldn't hold water. ○ There are still cisterns around the world and in Israel today. In Biblical days cisterns were either built or dug underground designed to hold water so that evaporation was not a problem.

And Jeremiah says that they had dug their own cisterns, but that they were broken cisterns that couldn't hold water – let alone life giving water. They had done what, even their surrounding nations had not done – they had exchanged their god; they had left the One True God, and begun to worship false gods – that could never bring fulfilment, satisfaction, meaning or life. The priests had forsaken the way of the Lord; the leaders, Kings, had rejected God, and even many of the prophets were now speaking under the prompting of Satan himself.

And the people blindly followed. Followed the false god's of the horoscope; the footy gods, Mother nature, the god's of prosperity, or mysticism.

But not only have they been led astray, but they seek to justify their actions. ○ V.35, **"In spite of all this, you say, 'I am innocent; He (God) is not angry with me ...I have not sinned.'**" V.23, **"I am not defiled..."** How easily we seek to justify our actions or pursuit of idols. How quickly we rationalise away our failure to put God first. ○ Do go to Facebook first thing the morning, or to your Faith Book? How quick we are to turn our time and energy back to other pursuits; Facebook, computer games, idols of the home and garden, sport and entertainment; pleasure and comfort, alcohol and other means to escape reality. "I am innocent; God is not angry with me ...I have not sinned; I am not defiled."

But God says through Jeremiah, "wake up." Your following after other god's has been a lustful disgrace. ○ V.23-25, **"How can you say, 'I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals'? See how you behaved in the valley; consider what you have done. You are a swift she-camel running here and there, a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving - in her heat who can restrain her? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her. Do not run until your feet are bare and your throat is dry. But you said, 'It's no use! I love foreign gods, and I must go after them.'"**

As Jeremiah's prophecy continues into chapter three, God refers to His people as living the life of a prostitute – lustfully pursuing other gods, as one who can't get enough of them. V.2,

“By the roadside you sat, waiting for lovers – you have defiled the land with your prostitution.”

This is a sad indictment of how far away from God the people have drifted; people who thought they were close to God, but needed to wake up. Jeremiah doesn't go on to describe the impending judgement that is about to come their way, but he does point out how the rains have not fallen and their land is less productive due to their sin. God in His mercy, seeks to bring them under conviction of their sin; to wake up through His prophet and the cause and effect of the weather. He speaks through Jeremiah a tough message that they would struggle to digest, but still God tries to reach out to them and desires that they turn back to Him – the spring of living water.

God has always been faithful and He is calling us to faithfulness. He is faithful to us as a loving father is to his children. He is faithful, as a husband is to his bride – the church. He died for her and always does all he can for her well-being. There is no greater love than this; than to lay down your life for your friends. And He simply desires that we be faithful to Him.

What do you talk about most? What are you most anxious about? Or what do you love the most? Where is your heart? “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

Where do you quench your thirst? Jesus said, **“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'”** (Jn 7:37-38)

According to the law of cause and effect, the person who drinks in Jesus, will be filled with living waters – life, joy and peace in abundance. May we commit to being faithful to our God; faithful children.