

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, November 5, 2016

The prophet Jeremiah lived six centuries before the birth of Jesus. He's sometimes called "The Weeping Prophet" and credited with writing the short poetic book of Lamentations as well as the much longer book of Jeremiah. His ministry task for the Lord was to preach to the recalcitrant Israelites that they needed to turn away from their sinful ways and come back to God. In short, God's people had lost their faith. They had become complacent and caught up in the ways of the world and even worshipped the idols of other nations. Jeremiah prophesied that their enemies would overthrow the kingdom and take them into captivity. His prophecy came to pass during the seventy year Babylonian exile (586 to 516 BC). His lamentations were certainly justified and he truly cared for his people's well-being, but he had been told by God that there would be retribution for their disobedience. It's one thing to lament for God, but it's totally different to lament on life.

It's quite easy to get caught up in our daily life issues. Whether dealing with business, church, family or individual matters, we need to see the bigger picture rather than the myopic view of our personal situation. Life is not always a bed of roses and the impact of those circumstances around us often has a much greater purpose than what we may personally experience. You see, we have this natural tendency to look only at the way circumstances affect us rather than the bigger picture.

Jeremiah was right in lamenting God's severed relationship with His people. In Jeremiah 7:1-11, God instructs him to stand at the temple gate and warn His people to change their ways and He will let them *"live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers forever and ever."* In Proverbs 6: 20-22, Solomon instructs us, *"My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you."*

What God wants from each of us is obedience. In our business dealings, he wants us to consider the impact our actions will have on others and ourselves. In our church affairs, He wants us to simply worship Him, give Him the glory, and come humbly to His altar. In our family matters, He wants us to be pleasing to Him and instruct our family in all His ways. And in our individual endeavors, He wants us to simply place Him and others before ourselves. If we sincerely look at all aspects of life in this manner, we too will lament over our shortcomings in our relationship to Him and others and start every day with a right heart attitude. He simply wants our faithfulness and a contrite heart for all those we meet who are unconvinced that He is the True God and the Author of Life.

In Matthew 5:6, Jesus tells us in the fourth beatitude, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."* Do you have an insatiable desire to know God the way Jeremiah obviously knew Him? Let me put it another way - Can you see God lamenting over all who have never come to accept Him as Lord and Savior? Do you have His compassion for the lost?

In Matthew 20:29-34, as Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho two blind men were sitting by the roadside. They shouted, asking Jesus to have mercy on them. They asked Jesus to restore their sight. In verse 34 we're told that, *"Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him."* It's that simple. Our Heavenly Father laments over all those who have strayed like lost sheep. He wants you to ask Him once and for all for the sight that will heal you and help you see all things differently. You need not lament in life!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Proverbs 6:16-20; Jeremiah 7:1-11; Matthew 20:29-34; Galatians 5:19-23

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Passages to Ponder: Proverbs 6:16-20; Jeremiah 7:1-11; Matthew 20:29-34; Galatians 5:19-23

Proverbs 6:16-20 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ There are six things the LORD hates,
seven that are detestable to him:
¹⁷ haughty eyes,
a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked schemes,
feet that are quick to rush into evil,
¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies
and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.
²⁰ My son, keep your father's command
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Jeremiah 7:1-11 New International Version (NIV)

⁷ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message:

"Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. ³ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" ⁵ If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, ⁶ if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, ⁷ then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. ⁸ But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

⁹ "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"—safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹ Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD.

Matthew 20:29-34 New International Version (NIV)

²⁹ As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰ Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³¹ The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³² Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³³ "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight."

³⁴ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Galatians 5:19-23 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.