**BCM Bible Study – September 7/8, 2022**

**Jeremiah: Ritualistic Worship and Disobedience (Jeremiah 7-9)**

Temple Sermon: Ritualistic Worship

Jeremiah 7:1-8:3 is known as the “Temple Sermon.” Jeremiah gives this indictment of Judah while standing at the gate of the temple, the heart of Jewish life where many people would be coming and going to worship God, or so they thought. Instead, they worship idols and have more of a connection with traditions than with obedience and attention to the Lord.

Ice breaker: What fun traditions does your family have? Are there any really obscure/weird ones?

* **Read Jeremiah 7:1-12**
	+ Consider again verses 4 and 8; both mention that Israel’s trust has been misplaced. In what have they placed their trust?
		- Evidently, the Judeans had adopted a ritualistic saying that they thought had some sort of salvific power. They were likely basing this false hope on an over-emphasis of the Davidic covenant: **Read 2 Samuel 7:12-16** (note that David is being spoken to by God). One author puts it this way: “The people assumed David’s descendants would rule forever, and God’s blessing would rest on Jerusalem and the temple no matter how Judah lived.”[[1]](#footnote-0)
		- Are there certain religious activities (going to church, baptism, serving the community, financial giving) that you struggle with leaning too heavily upon for God’s acceptance?
		- How can we participate in these good, God-ordained activities without becoming ritualistic?
	+ Aside from empty words, for what else does God indict Judah?
		- What characterizes the wayward behavior of Judah in verses 5-6?
		- Is it surprising to you that these are the sins that God mentions first? Why or why not?
		- What does this teach you about the heart of God and how do you think this translates to modern society?
		- *Interesting note: verse 9 is an allusion to the 10 commandments.*
	+ God, through Jeremiah, juxtaposes two concepts in this passage: empty rituals and sinful behavior.
		- Why do you think God talks about these two things together in this passage?
		- From your experience, how do these two things feed into one another?
		- Alternatively, how do genuine worship and obedient behavior fuel one another?

Verses 12-15 gives an example of a previous Israelite sanctuary that had been destroyed. If this can happen at Shiloh, it can happen in Jerusalem. In verses 16-20, God tells Jeremiah to stop praying for the people because of their extreme wickedness – his patience is coming to an end despite innumerable chances he has given them to repent.

* **Read Jeremiah 7:21-26**
	+ Verse 23 is an allusion to the Mosaic covenant. **Read Exodus 19:1-6**.
		- What does God promise Israel? What does he declare about them?
		- Upon what is this promise contingent?
		- What reason does God give them to obey?
	+ Reflecting on everything that has been read so far, it is evident that obedience itself is an important aspect of genuine worship.In fact, if we are simply “going through the motions” and our lives do not reflect obedience to God or a striving and openness towards repentance, then our worship, like that of the Judeans, is empty.  **Read John 14:21, Romans 12:1**. How do these verses shape your definition of worship?
		- When do you find that it is most difficult to be obedient to God?
		- Why do you think walking in your “own counsels” (v.24) is often so attractive? Why is this misguided?
		- How have you seen God work in your life in the past? In what way does this encourage obedience on your part?

**Read Jeremiah 8:21-9:2, 9:12**

At points, it can be challenging to follow along and understand whether it is the Lord, Jeremiah, or even the quoting of someone else that is occurring in some of the exchanges in Jeremiah. Yet, here we have part of what Jeremiah said to the Lord. We cannot really be certain if this was a prayer or something that Jeremiah would have proclaimed publicly.

* How does Jeremiah’s response and sorrow here compare to any expectations you might have had for him?
* What does Jeremiah’s response offer you as we think about it in conjunction with the themes of obedience and repentance?
* What comfort do Jeremiah’s words to God in 9:12 bring you in talking about hard, difficult things?

**Challenge**

Over the next week, spend time praying like Jeremiah prayed for Israel. Think of the brokenness of Virginia Tech, your classmates, professors, and all those who don’t know Christ here.

**Extra Note**

Jeremiah 8, Jeremiah declares that Judah will become a wasteland of death because of their idol-worship and disobedience. The community leaders had lied to the people about their spiritual well-being like a doctor who tells a sick patient that he or she is healthy. Jeremiah grieves for the people because of God’s coming judgment to which they are blind; he weeps repeatedly. The people worship idols made of stone and wood instead of the living God! As a result, God has no choice but to send them into exile. In the midst of this sad, severe language, there is striking statement from God that shows his desire for people to return to him: **Read Jeremiah 9:23-24.**

1. Encountering the Old Testament, Bill Arnold and Brian Beyer. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)