

I will turn their mourning into joy — 10/15/23

Scripture: Jeremiah 31

Big Idea: God restores what was devastated and makes a new covenant with his people.

PRAY - Pray for Gary Cooper and Stone Soup

INTRODUCTION:

Imagine yourself in the depths of exilic depression... These are undoubtedly the bleak backdrop to the 'new covenant' text before us. Up to now, the only way Jeremiah had ever spoken of the covenant was to say that it was broken, shattered—lying in ruins as Jerusalem itself now was. What question would be uppermost in your mind? Surely it would be, 'Can there be any future for us now? If the covenant has ended, surely it is the end also for Israel. If we are no longer the covenant people of YHWH, then we are no longer a people at all. We are without hope and without God in the world.' Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah: Grace in the End*, 324–325.

TRANSITION:

Chapter 2—Book of Consolation/Comfort.

To those in Exile— The days are coming... On this side of history, we know they came. **What do we learn about God from this?**

HERE'S WHAT THE TEXT SAYS: Jeremiah 31

"At that time, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people." {this is the Lord's declaration}

² This is what the Lord says:

The people who survived the sword found favor in the wilderness (a reference to the original exodus). When Israel went to find rest, **³ the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued to extend faithful love to you.** ⁴ Again I will build you so that you will be rebuilt, Virgin Israel. You will take up your tambourines again and go out in **joyful dancing.** ⁵ You will plant vineyards again on the mountains of Samaria; the planters will plant and will **enjoy the fruit.** ⁶ For there will be a day when watchmen will call out in the hill country of **Ephraim (Israel), "Come, let's go up to Zion, to the Lord our God!"**

At that time— the restoration of the exiles.

The Lord appeared from FAR AWAY because of His faithful love— a statement of fact.

...I will build so that ...you can dance joyfully & enjoy the fruit that has been planted.

Ephraim/Israel— **Come, let's go up...** An invitation to rejoin God in the holy city.

God Invites Exiles to Join Him. v3–6

Why? Because of his HESED love.

⁷ For this is what the Lord says:

Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations! **Proclaim, praise,** and say, "Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel!" ⁸ Watch! **I am going to bring them** from the northern land. **I will gather** them from remote regions of the earth—the **blind** and the **lame** will be with them, along with those who are **pregnant** and those about to give birth. They will return here as a great assembly! ⁹ They will come weeping, but **I will bring them back with consolation (comfort). I will lead them to** wadis filled with **water,** by **a smooth way** where **they will not stumble,** for I am Israel's Father, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Sing with joy for Jacob....

...I will gather— **the blind, the lame, and pregnant.(the vulnerable)**

...I will bring them back with compassion

...I will lead them— **the Good Shepherd— he leads me beside** still waters and right paths.

I am going to bring back and lead (the blind, the lame, and those about to give birth) **the vulnerable**. They will not stumble. The one who scattered will gather. God will watch over and shepherd his flock. **IOW**, he will keep his promises even when the people don't keep theirs.

God Provides Comfort for the Vulnerable. v7–9

How? By leading them to (living) water and the right paths. See **Woman at the Well— John 4.**

¹⁰ **Nations**, hear the word of the Lord, and tell it among the far-off coasts and islands! Say, “**The one who scattered Israel will gather him. He will watch over him as a shepherd guards his flock, ¹¹ for the Lord has RANSOMED Jacob and REDEEMED him from the power of one stronger than he.**”

¹² They will come and **shout for joy** on the heights of Zion; they will be radiant with joy **because of the Lord's goodness**, because of the grain, the new wine, the fresh oil, and because of the young of the flocks and herds. Their life will be like an irrigated garden, and they will no longer grow weak from hunger. ¹³ Then the young women will **rejoice with dancing**, while young and old men rejoice together. **I will turn their mourning into joy, give them consolation (tahanun- a plea for mercy), and bring happiness out of grief.**

¹⁴ **I will refresh** the priests with an abundance, and **my people will be satisfied with my goodness.**
This is the Lord's declaration.

Shout for joy, Nations, because of the Lord's goodness. Rejoice with dancing because **mourning is turned into joy**, and grief is turned into happiness.

The Lord has **ransomed** (to purchase or buy out) and **redeemed** (to use your position, influence, or resources to gain access to or to acquire) his people.

RANSOMED (*padah*)— used in Exodus 13:13 as a substitutionary sacrifice of every firstborn.

REDEEMED (*goel*)— Boaz is a redeemer in Ruth.

My people will be refreshed and satisfied with my goodness.

God Ransoms and Redeems People from (their self-inflicted) Mourning and Grief. v10–14

How? *You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. 1 Co 6:19–20.*

Ransomed and Redeemed people — ransom and redeem other people.

*Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and **has given us the ministry of reconciliation.** ¹⁹ That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.*

*²⁰ Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, “Be reconciled to God.” **2 Co 5:18–20.***

¹⁵ **This is what the Lord says:**

A voice was **heard** in Ramah, a lament with bitter weeping—**Rachel** (Rachel = Israel) weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children because they are no more. (They are in exile)

16 This is what the Lord says:

Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for **the reward for your (Rachel) work (childbirth) will come—and your children will return** from the enemy's land. **{this is the Lord's declaration}**

17 There is hope for your future—and your children will return to their own territory. {this is the Lord's declaration}

Rachel weeping— Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin (southern kingdom) and the grandmother of Ephraim and Manasseh (northern kingdom).

Jer. 31:15 is quoted in Matt. 2:17–18. Herod the Great's slaughter of the young boys in Bethlehem provoked lamentation among the bereaved. Matthew reminds readers of his Gospel that **this is not the first time that children among God's people have been killed. The evil work of Herod and the sorrows it produced are part of a larger scriptural pattern already reported in Rachel's weeping.**

18 I (God) have surely heard Ephraim (the 10 northern Tribes) moaning, "You disciplined me, and I have been disciplined like an untrained calf. Take me back, so that I can return, for you, Lord, are my God.

19 After my return, I felt regret; After I was instructed, I struck my thigh in grief. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth."**20** Isn't Ephraim **a precious son to me (God)**, a delightful child? Whenever I **(God)** speak against him, I **(God)** **certainly still think about him.** Therefore, my inner being **(womb) yearns for him; I (God) will truly have compassion on him.**

This is the Lord's declaration.

v18-20— The Israelites who have sinned and been cast from their land are personified in Ephraim, who confesses his failures. **God tenderly accepts his repentance, describing Ephraim as his "dear son" (cf. 31:9), a child for whom his heart yearns.** God's **parental** mercy is paramount in these verses. J. Andrew Dearman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 285.

God hears and has Compassion for Repentant People. v15-20

God's hearing leads to God's action.

Are you repentant for what you have done? God hears you and yearns for you. Like the Father in Luke 15.

21 Set up road markers for yourself; establish signposts! Keep the highway (the high road-ancient paths) in mind, the way you have traveled. **Return, Virgin Israel! Return** to these cities of yours. **22 How long will you turn here and there, faithless daughter? For the Lord creates something new in the land—a female will shelter a man.**

How long will you waver (turn here and there)? Return (repent)—Remember the ancient paths...

A female will shelter a man— the phrase points to a surprising and compassionate act of God in making new life possible for those who were estranged in exile. J. Andrew Dearman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 286.

Set up Markers and establish Signposts to keep you on the High Road. v15–22

What could these be? Bible reading plan, Bible study group, accountability group, etc.

23 This is what the Lord of Armies (who rules over all), the God of Israel, says:

"When I restore their fortunes, they will once again speak this word in the land of **Judah** and in its cities: 'May the Lord bless you, righteous settlement, holy mountain.' **24** Judah and all its cities will live in it together—also farmers and those who move with the flocks—**25** for **I satisfy the thirsty person and feed all those who are weak.**" **26** At this I awoke and looked around. My sleep had been most pleasant to me.

27 "Look, the days are coming—when I will sow the house of **Israel** and the house of **Judah** with the seed of people and the seed of animals. **28** Just as I watched over them to uproot and to tear them down, to demolish and to destroy, and to cause disaster, so will **I watch over them** to build and to plant them"— **{this is the Lord's declaration} this is the Lord's declaration.**

v23-28— *This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "When I restore their fortunes (release them from exile) they will once again speak words of blessing.*

God will satisfy the thirsty and feed the weak. **See Is 58—** satisfy the afflicted

God will sow (plant) and build the people and animals in the land.

God will watch over the construction and planting.

29 "In those days, it will never again be said, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' **30 Rather,** each will die for his own iniquity. Anyone who eats sour grapes—his own teeth will be set on edge.

...personal accountability instead of corporate accountability

31 "Look, the days are coming—when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. **{this is the Lord's declaration}**

32 This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—**my covenant that they broke** even though I am their master"—**the Lord's declaration.**

I'm making a new covenant— because of the inability of the people to keep the old one.

Once they were saved, God's people had to keep God's covenant in order to receive God's blessing. They had to worship God alone, keep the Sabbath holy, preserve the sanctity of human life, tell the truth, and obey the rest of the Ten Commandments (vv. 3–17). The Mosaic Covenant was a good and gracious covenant. There was only one problem with the Old Covenant—sin. The covenant was broken even before it could be ratified. By the time Moses came down from the mountain, the people had cast a golden idol... **Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Sorrow to Hope*, 466.**

Breaking the old Covenant ends with a Curse—exile and death of the people.

33 "Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days—I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

34 No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them— For **I will forgive their iniquity** and never again remember their sin. **{this is the Lord's declaration}**

A New Covenant in God's own blood.

What would only come to light when Jesus inaugurated this new covenant (Mt. 26:28), was the fact that **each of these divine gifts was a costly self-giving.** Forgiveness would be through his own blood, and it would be not only the law but its Author who would indwell the believer (Jn. 14:17, 23). **D Kidner**

At the Last Supper, Jesus says: *For this is my blood of the {NEW} covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Mt 26:28.*

This new covenant results in Jesus' death and exile, but new hearts and the holy spirit for believers. Grace and mercy.

35 "This is what the Lord says:

The one who gives the sun for light by day, the fixed order of moon and stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea and makes its waves roar—the Lord of Armies is his name: (He promises it as the one who is known as the Lord who rules over all. NET) **36** If this fixed order departs from before me—only then will Israel's descendants cease to be a nation before me forever. **{this is the Lord's declaration}**

As long as the fixed order of things—the sun rising in the east and setting in the west—goes on, so will the new covenant. So says the Lord who rules over all!

37 "This is what the Lord says:

Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below explored will I reject all of Israel's descendants because of all they have done—**this is the Lord's declaration.**

If heaven can be measured and the foundations of the earth mapped out, then I'll reject Israel.

38 "Look, the days are coming—when the city from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate will be rebuilt for the Lord. **39** A measuring line will once again stretch out straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn toward Goah. **40 The whole valley—the corpses, the ashes, and all the fields as far as the Kidron Valley to the corner of the Horse Gate to the east—will be holy to the Lord.** It will never be uprooted or demolished again." **{this is the Lord's declaration}**

The whole valley will be holy to the Lord.

So what do we do with this?

We take heart, and we receive comfort because God has done what he said he would do. He did it before, and he is faithful to do it again.

What do we learn about God from this passage?

What do we learn about faithful living?

What's the call to action?

Ministry Fair

PRAY

BLESSING

May you and I, may we together, be people who