

Sermon

Journeying With Jeremiah — Empty Cisterns & Honey from the Rock

A Sermon for Cary Presbyterian Church

Sunday, August 28, 2022

12th Sunday After Pentecost

Prayer For Illumination:

Lord, as we read the words of the Psalmist we hear you say:

- † “Hear O my people,” and
- † “But my people did not listen,” and finally,
- † “O that my people would listen.”

It seems that we are not the first invited to hear your word and take it to heart. Help us, Lord, as the word is read and proclaimed, to *listen* and to receive from you a word.

- † A word that lasts.
- † A word which invites us to renewed life before you.

We pray in the name of the Word made flesh, who lived among us full of grace and truth — even our Lord, the Christ. Amen.

Psa. 81:0 To the leader: according to The Gittith. Of Asaph.

- 1 *Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob.*
- 2 *Raise a song, sound the tambourine,
the sweet lyre with the harp.*
- 3 *Blow the trumpet at the new moon,
at the full moon, on our festal day.*

4 For it is a statute for Israel,
an ordinance of the God of Jacob.
5 He made it a decree in Joseph,
when he went out over the land of Egypt.

I hear a voice I had not known:

6 “I relieved your shoulder of the burden;
your hands were freed from the basket.
7 In distress you called, and I rescued you;
I answered you in the secret place of thunder;
I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah
8 Hear, O my people, while I admonish you;
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!
9 There shall be no strange god among you;
you shall not bow down to a foreign god.
10 I am the LORD your God,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

Psa. 81:11 “But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.
13 O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
14 Then I would quickly subdue their enemies,
and turn my hand against their foes.
15 Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him,
and their doom would last forever.
16 I would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Jer. 2:4 Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families
of the house of Israel. *5* Thus says the LORD:
What wrong did your ancestors find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?

- 6 *They did not say, “Where is the LORD
 who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
 who led us in the wilderness,
 in a land of deserts and pits,
 in a land of drought and deep darkness,
 in a land that no one passes through,
 where no one lives?”*
- 7 *I brought you into a plentiful land
 to eat its fruits and its good things.
 But when you entered you defiled my land,
 and made my heritage an abomination.*
- 8 *The priests did not say, “Where is the LORD?”
 Those who handle the law did not know me;
 the rulers transgressed against me;
 the prophets prophesied by Baal,
 and went after things that do not profit.*

- Jer. 2:9 Therefore once more I accuse you, says the LORD,
 and I accuse your children’s children.*
- 10 *Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
 send to Kedar and examine with care;
 see if there has ever been such a thing.*
- 11 *Has a nation changed its gods,
 even though they are no gods?
 But my people have changed their glory
 for something that does not profit.*
- 12 *Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
 be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the LORD,*
- 13 *for my people have committed two evils:
 they have forsaken me,
 the fountain of living water,
 and dug out cisterns for themselves,
 cracked cisterns
 that can hold no water.*

- I. We have a worship service full of good things today so I will keep my remarks brief.**
- A. In the poetry of the Hebrew bible it is the writings of the prophets which best shows us the anguish of God in the face of our obstinance.**
 - B. There we see God struggle to not give up on the relationship with God’s people which costs God so much.**
 - C. Often, God takes us metaphorically to court and lays out God’s case against us.**
 - D. That is what we see in today’s passage from Jeremiah 2.**
 - 1. In this “courtroom” the heavens are sitting in the jury box and God begins with an opening query and accusation.**

II. The case against us

- A. “What wrong has caused you to chase after worthless things?”**

5 Thus says the LORD:

*What wrong did your ancestors find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?*

*6 They did not say, “Where is the LORD
who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep darkness,
in a land that no one passes through,
where no one lives?”*

- B. Both priests and rulers join in the folly**

*8 The priests did not say, “Where is the LORD?”
Those who handle the law did not know me;*

*the rulers transgressed against me;
the prophets prophesied by Baal,
and went after things that do not profit.*

C. Therefore . . . I accuse you

D. Dramatically turns to the jury box and says:

- 10 *Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar and examine with care;
see if there has ever been such a thing.*
- 11 *Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?
But my people have changed their glory
for something that does not profit.*
- 12 *Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the LORD,*
- 13 *for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water.*

III. Two evils

- A. Forsaken me - the fountain of living water**
B. Dug cisterns for themselves

That is, they have given up dependency in preference for self-sufficiency.

C. From Martin Luther's catechism (Ex. 20:3)

"God is the one to which we look for all good . . . Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is properly your God"

D. Micah 6:8 "to walk humbly" is a difficult translation because the word we translate

“humbly” is unique in scripture - only used one other time in reference to Moses and likely means something like “living in subordination” to God.

- E. Not only have we abandoned a proper dependence upon God — but we have “dug out cisterns.”**
 - 1. Seems like good water management . . .**
 - 2. But in this case amounts to a decision to try to have a prosperous life without reference to God who sends the rain.**
 - 3. The cisterns are cracked, by the way, they cannot preserve the water collected.**

**IV. When we look at Psalm 81 we see a similar pattern
“Hear O people of God”
“Listen to my voice”**

*Psa. 81:11 “But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.*

*12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.*

- A. Sound familiar?**
- B. At the heart of a life of faith is the conviction that:**
 - 1. God can be known**
 - 2. That we do not know everything**
 - 3. That *if* we will turn to God and expect to receive from God the things worth having — that there will be enough, and more, and more than enough.**

“Praise GOD from who all blessings flow...”

V. In a few minutes we will baptize little Ruby and we will make promises to support her as she grows in faith.

A. We don't have to make that too complicated.

B. We are saying that we will show her what it looks like to live a life in reference to God.

C. Sara Groves has become a trusted singer-song writer. In her song "Enough" references Psalm 81 when she sings:

*Upstairs, a child is sleeping
What a light in our strain and stress
We pray without speaking
Lord help us wait in kindness.
Really we don't need much
Just strength to believe
there's honey in the rock
there is more than we see.
The patches of joy
these stretches of sorrow
There's enough for today
There will be enough tomorrow.*

D. Friends, there is honey in the rock.

1. It may appear to be wilderness. . . but God is with us.

2. Let us live like we know that.



Enough

Sara Groves

Floodplain

Details

Artwork

Lyrics

Late nights, long hours
Questions are drawn like a thin red line
No comfort left over
No safe harbor in sight
Really we don't need much
Just strength to believe
There's honey in the rock,
There's more than we see
In these patches of joy
These stretches of sorrow
There's enough for today
There will be enough tomorrow
Upstairs a child is sleeping
What a light in our strain and stress
We pray without speaking
Lord help us wait in kindness
Really we don't need much
Just strength to believe
There's honey in the rock,
There's more than we see
In these patches of joy
These stretches of sorrow
There's enough for today
There will be enough tomorrow

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