

Cross Keys United Methodist Church

2017 Lenten Devotional

Week 2

Monday, March 6

Jeremiah 6:13-15

*They dress the wound of my people
as though it were not serious. Jeremiah 6:14a*

The book of Jeremiah is a warning not only for biblical times, but also for us today. The themes of greed, deceit, lies, and being unashamed of sin and disobedience sound very familiar to us today. Jesus had great compassion for the sinner. Yet, Jesus also held up a clear standard of what was right and wrong—of what behaviors would bring true joy and which ones would bring pain and suffering. Many people today seem to have lost their moral compass and uncritically accept harmful attitudes and behaviors that lead down a slippery and dangerous slope.

Just like Jeremiah, Christians have to be unafraid to speak out when it seems unpopular to go against the mainstream culture. In love and compassion and in order to be faithful to God's message, there may be times when we must share truth from God's Word that friends or neighbors may not want to hear or find uncomfortable. When we do so, we must be careful that we are not speaking out of anger or frustration. Instead we should speak with great gentleness and respect and with a great hope for healing and restoration.

In Jeremiah's day, those who refused to acknowledge their rebellion brought God's judgment on themselves. The consequences of turning away from God are plainly evident as we look upon the broken homes and families and shattered

dreams that are all too common in our culture today. Jesus took the punishment that Jeremiah said a sinful people deserved. Jeremiah's message of repentance and turning to God is just as relevant today as it was then. During Lent, let's accept God's amazing gift of healing as we genuinely confess and repent of our own sin and carry the truth of God's Word into the world.

Nancy Gooley

Tuesday, March 7

Jeremiah 30:12-15

*Why do you cry out over your wound,
your pain that has no cure?
Because of your great guilt and many sins
I have done these things to you. Jeremiah 30:16*

Once I finished reading this passage I was left with feelings of hopelessness for those who were experiencing all this pain and suffering. Although once I read the preface to Jeremiah and read a little more of the verses in the chapter, I came to realize what was actually going on in the story. This passage reminds me of the scripture reading on Sunday, February 26 from Jonah 3: 1-10. In that reading, Jonah was sent to carry a message of judgement to Nineveh. The Ninevites heeded Jonah's warning and repented of their evil ways and turned to God. In contrast, this reading is about Jeremiah and how he tried to plead with the people of Judah to repent from their evil ways and yet unlike the Ninevites, the people of Judah refused. God showed compassion on the people of Nineveh because they repented, but unfortunately for Judah they just

experienced pain and suffering because of their unwillingness to repent.

For the people of Judah their disobedience caused pain and suffering when God was freely offering healing if they just repented. God is a loving God who does not want His children to be in pain or to suffer. Our children must learn from us that sin has its consequences, but for those who repent there is forgiveness. On the cross Jesus forgave the sins of the world once and for all. When we truly and humbly repent, we claim that gift as our own. Our God is a God of second chances, he offers them freely. Will we receive them? We need to be willing to accept the healing that God offers us. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and His suffering occurred so that we no longer have to suffer. Let's accept the forgiveness and healing that God is offering us. We do not have to carry the burden of pain and suffering with us, we simply need to turn to God and leave it all with him.

Tina Hegeman

Wednesday, March 8 Hosea 14

"Bring your confessions, and return to the Lord"
Hosea 14:2a (NLT)

In verses 1 and 2 of today's passage of scripture God tells Israel that their sins have bought them down. He tells Israel to confess their sins and return to Him. Israel is to say to the Lord "Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer You our praises". If Israel repents God says in verse 4 "Then I will heal you of your faithlessness, My love will know no bounds, for My anger will be gone forever". In the New Testament,

Romans 5:8 says, "But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners". While reading Hosea 14 and Romans 5:8, I was thinking that God is amazing. He is always ready to take us back if we repent and show us love without bounds. I am always amazed God loves me as an individual and wants to have a relationship with me. Obviously I am not a perfect person, and God knows this, but He is still always there for me. What a privilege to go through life's journey with the Lord at my side.

Robert Monson

Thursday, March 9 Jeremiah 2:1-13

"They did not ask, 'Where is the Lord...'" Jeremiah 2:6a

How could an entire nation turn its back on God? Why would they ignore the One who loved them, who had delivered them over and over from countless enemies? What would cause their hearts to become so hard? "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" (Jeremiah 2:13, NIV).

Genuine or fake

Masterpiece or forgery

Real or artificial

Substantial or superficial

Living God or idol

To choose the Lord, to drink deeply from the stream of living water, we must also give our hearts and lives to Jesus. We are the followers; Jesus is the Lord. And that is the source of our human struggle—we must surrender our wills, pick up our

crosses, and follow day by day. When we turn our eyes away from Jesus, we stop asking, "Where is the Lord?" When we fail to set our minds on what is true, we become distracted by the fakes, the forgeries, the artificial, the superficial, and other idols.

Today, let's look for the Lord. Let's expect to see evidence of God's grace throughout the day. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let's rejoice and give thanks for the little blessings as well as the big blessings. Let's rest in Jesus' love. Let's allow the Spirit to search our hearts for any spiritual hardening of the arteries, and then let us trust Jesus to heal our brokenness. And finally, let us drink deeply from the streams of living water that only Jesus can give. Let's find Jesus and walk with him today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen

Colleen Fitch

Friday, March 10 2 Chronicles 7:11-16

"...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

In today's reading - Chronicles 7:11-16, God speaks to Solomon in a dream and tells him that the people, as the family of God, need to pray--a prayer to acknowledge God as the people's source of goodness and as a healing power for all.

Our faith and prayer help us navigate through life's ups and downs. Our faith can also help us to keep focused on each other as members of the family of God. We know that through faith God lives in each one of us--so start and stay with that

thought! We also know that God is our source of strength and goodness--so look for the strengths and goodness in other members of God's larger family and be that source for the people around us. Since we respect God as our Father who guides us, we need to pray for the light bulb to go on. When we allow the Holy Spirit to illuminate our daily routines, we can bring healing to others and, by our own example, help others to be more generous with their own God given gifts. What we do and say can be such a great resource to encourage, to bless and to empower others around us. If we ask God for His healing power, He will give it--and his joy within us will strengthen our faith, help us to grow and bring a new hope to those around us.

John Dreisbach

Saturday, March 11 Isaiah 57:14-21

*"I have seen their ways, but I will heal them;
I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's
mourners,
creating praise on their lips." Isaiah 57:18-19a*

Bandaged boo-boos, bothersome backaches, broken bones, bruised feelings, battered spirits...is there any one of us who has not experienced the result of sin either from our own choices or just because we live in a sin-stained world? Each day upon awakening, we struggle, working to mend the brokenness in the world around us--nursing a dying loved one, comforting a son/daughter in a bad relationship, coping with the effects of substance abuse, soothing a child torn by divorce, crying with a hurting friend and looking for ways to alleviate pain and sadness in our own hearts. Not only do

we experience darkness around us but inside our own selves we struggle with selfishness, resentment, guilt--the overall effects of our own sin.

David reminds us in Psalm 14 that, "...all have turned away; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not a single one." That part of the story can seem very dreary and discouraging. But, thanks be to God and His kind and loving heart! Paul reminds us of the good news in Romans 5:8,

"But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

Stop here! Read it again, slower this time!

It is the blood of Christ, shedding down the cross for us, the undeserved, that affords us healing! And while we can claim this today and experience its benefits here on earth, we can look forward to our final ultimate healing when we see Jesus face to face! The promise of living eternally with God in heaven...pain-free!

What a day of rejoicing that will be!

When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!

Sandy Tilden