

The Covenant and the Prophets
Sermon Prepared for WellSpring Church
August 14, 2011
Primary text Jeremiah 1:1-10

1. Introduction

a. Engage: How are we to listen to sermons? What would be the difference in your life if the gospel and preaching were suddenly taken away from you? What happens when we forget to listen to God?

i. “Lastly. Learn what cause you of this congregation and parish, have to expect that God should bring you into great straits [difficulties], because of your great unthankfulness and unfruitfulness under the means of the grace, you that have so long enjoyed the gospel; you have had the gospel in this place in great abundance; Dr. Taylor served an apprenticeship in this place [seven years]; Dr. Stoughton served another apprenticeship, and I through divine mercy, have served three apprenticeships and half amongst you [twenty three years]; you have had the spirit of God seven and thirty years ion the faithful ministry of the word, knocking at the door of your hearts, but many of you have hardened your hearts. Are there not some of you...that begin to loathe the manna of your souls and look back towards Egypt again? Are there not some of you have itching ears, and would fain have preachers that would feed you with dainty phrases, and begin not to care for a minister that unrips your consciences, speaks to your hearts and souls and would force you into heaven by frightening you out of your sins? Are there not some of you, that by often hearing sermons, are now become sermon proof, that know how to sleep and scoff away sermons? I should be glad to say, there are but few such; but the Lord knoweth there are too many that by long preaching, get little good by preaching, ...I have often said it and say it now again, there is hardly any way to raise the price of the gospel-ministry, but by the want [lack] of it: And that I may not flatter you, you have not profited under the means you have long enjoyed, therefore you may justly expect may bring you into a strait, and take away the gospel from you: God may justly take away your ministers by death and other ways....What God will do with you I know not; a few weeks will determine....” Edmund Calamy’s final sermon to his congregation preached August 17, 1662, one week before the Great Ejection.

ii. The Great Ejection, August 24, 1662. St Bartholomew’s Day. (1572, France) 2,000 Pastors forced to leave their churches, prohibited from leading worship in homes, prohibited from

coming any nearer than five miles to any town or village in which they had ever lived. Prohibited from teaching school, at the mercy of informers.

- iii. The section caught my eye for two reasons beyond its inherent power
 - 1. My daily reading was Jeremiah 25:3-4
 - 2. I have been preaching in Springfield for nearly 23 years
 - b. Review
 - i. The Covenants in general: God's gracious rules, boundaries and instructions for knowing how to live in relationship with him. (Psalm 15; 147:20; Notice Delight in Psalm 119).
 - 1. Adam in Eden
 - 2. The Covenant of the Rainbow and Noah
 - 3. Abraham
 - 4. Moses, Sinai and the Law
 - 5. David
 - ii. The in between times... Remember what we read three weeks ago that all of the Remainder of the Old Testament after Exodus 19: 4,5 is a commentary on Israel's faithfulness.
 - iii. We have seen the demands and the promises of the Covenant.
 - c. Preview: Today we look at the role and the message of the Prophets of the Old Testament particularly in relation to the Covenants of God. What we will find is that God is always faithful to his Covenant and gracious to his promises even when his people are not. This is why we read in Isa. 65:2 "I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people." This is why we can read in Jer. 7:13, 21-26 that God was persistent in his calls to his people.
 - d. Big Idea: God is always speaking are we listening, God is always speaking are we hearing, God is always speaking are we responding? When we can hear the words of the divine law written on our hearts, when we refuse to hear the law of God written on the tablets of stone—God sends messengers. Will we listen?
 - e. Read Text: Jeremiah 1:1-10; 18-19 The Call and Commission of Jeremiah : He is a Prophet.
- 2. The Persistence of God
 - a. Jer. 7:13, 21-26
 - b. 25:1-7
 - c. 26:1-6
 - d. 29: 19
 - e. 35:14, 15
 - f. 44:4-6
 - 3. The office and role of the prophet
 - a. He is called by God, no one calls himself to be a prophet (or a pastor, or an elder) 1:5, 17
 - b. He is sent to speak 1:7, 9

- i. At the most basic level a prophet is one who speaks for God. He is both representative and mouthpiece.
 - ii. At a deeper level the speaking on behalf of God is under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. In the New Testament this person is called a Herald, or a preacher.
 - iv. It is much more than one who preaches in the sense of a moral message. “For God to speak with his mouth and to speak through his prophets is the same thing.” (Edward J. Young, My Servants the Prophets, 59)
 - c. He is called to be courageous 1:8
 - d. He is called to be consistent and called to perseverance. 1:18, 19
- 4. What is the message of the prophets?
 - a. Future tellers? Many people think that the prophets were concerned only with the future, that their messages contained cryptic but exact information about future events, often very distant future events. thus they understand ‘prophesy’ to mean ‘to predict the future.’ Many evangelical Christians believe that the prophets foretell the course of the world events, particularly the events immediately prior to or adjacent to the return of the Lord.” (Far as the Curse is Found, Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing 2005, 199)
 - i. Didn’t they predict the future? Yes the promised judgment, blessing, warnings, they promised salvation—See Jeremiah 42:10-17
 - b. The prophets were “covenant enforcers” They were the prosecuting attorneys in the court of God’s covenant evaluation. They were the functionaries of a format known in the ancient world as the *rib*, pronounced “reebv.” The elements of the *rib* are:
 - i. A recitation of the past great things that God has/had done for Israel—he is reminding them of His covenant faithfulness
 - ii. A proclamation of Israel’s covenant obligations (the law generally summarized by one or two commandments)
 - iii. A statement of Covenant Indictment. The prophets often enumerate both the general and the specific sins of the people.
 - iv. A declaration of Yahweh’s covenant curse on Israel, the inevitable judgment and punishment that comes with the refusal to do God’s will, walk in his ways.
 - v. A call to repentance and the promise of Covenant blessedness that will follow the return to the Covenant
 - c. A Part of the way that the prophets called the people back to the covenant and covenant faithfulness by pointing out their sin. Look at Jer. 3:11-15; Jer. 4:1-2; Jer. 6:16
 - i. Sin that arose from superstition—institutions: temple, city, sacrifices, feasts, city, election.
 - 1. example the ark of the covenant going into battle in I Samuel 4:4

- 2. Example Isa. 1:11-17 feasts and fasts, sacrifices
 - ii. Sins: Primarily: Sabbath breaking, idolatry, materialism, injustice.
 - iii. Listen to the sin language in the first chapters of Jeremiah—God is graphic here
 - 1. Whoring
 - 2. pollution
 - 3. treachery
 - 4. stubbornness
 - 5. Faithlessness
 - 6. Rebellion
 - 7. shameless
 - 8. pretencew
 - 9. perversion
 - 10. forgetfulness
 - 11. delusion
- 5. Four primary areas of concern regarding sin
 - a. The people continually given evidence in the writings of the prophets that keeping the Sabbath was not a high priority with the people. See Isaiah 56:1,2; 58:13 -14. (Booktable: Iain Murray, Rest in God and Walter Chantry, Call the Sabbath a Delight)
 - b. Idols/idolatry
 - i. Two kinds of idolatry—what is idolatry?
 - 1. Worshipping a false or wrong god
 - 2. Worshipping the true God in a wrong way, with a wrong mindset.
 - a. Lev. 10:1-3 Nadab and Abihu
 - b. Saul I Sam. 15—I desire obediecen not sacrifice
 - ii. Two kinds of idols were seen in the people—the calf at Sinai was not a false God it was a wrong representation of the true God. The greatest sin was worshipping the idol-gods of the nations.
 - c. Greed/ materialism
 - i. This too is a result of an idol(we will see this in a moment)
 - ii. They focused on the wealth that came through David, Solomon, tolls, taxes, trade. There was a wealthy class. See I Kings 10:27; 2 Chron. 1:15; 9:27. Gold as common as silver.
 - iii. Isaiah 3:16-23
 - iv. These people were profiting from the nations rather than being a light to the nations
 - d. Injustice/ a lack of love for neighbor
 - i. Mercy not sacrifice Hos. 6:6
 - ii. Isaiah 58:3-7
- 6. The Message of the prophets for us in the new covenant. What would the prophets say, what do they have to say to us today. Let me focus on only one

of these four areas: Idolatry. I recommend Radical, by David Platt to help you get a handle on Greed and Injustice

- a. The worship impulse—we are created to worship, the question is not ever will we worship, but what will we worship? When we do not worship God we are idolaters. All of us are idolaters. We all either worship a created thing rather than the creator. We often are more enthused about the stuff God has made than we are the God who made the stuff.
- b. What then are idols/idolatry?
 - i. There are two kinds of idolatry
 1. Worshipping a false or wrong god
 2. Worshipping the true God in a wrong way, with a wrong mindset.
 - a. Image—we make a wrong picture of God
 - b. manner—we add elements to our worship for our own feeling, senses
 - c. syncretism, we add the Worship of the true God to the worship of our other little gods.

Darrin Patrick writes in Church Planter, “This is a radical reality: every single human being on the planet is a worshipper. Humans make knowledge, power, fame, sex, sports, hobbies, work, and toys their objects of worship, ultimate focus, and central identity. Which is to say, they are always worshipping something—either God or something in the place of God. Martin Lloyd-Jones defines an idol as ‘anything that occupies the place that should be occupied by God alone. An idol is anything that holds such a controlling position in my life that it moves and rouses and attracts me so easily that I give my time, my attention, my energy and my money to it effortlessly.’” (p. 159)

- ii. Two kinds of idols
 1. Near (surface)—Here are the *sins* that we generally focus on: children, sex, spouse, marriage, cars, money, education, anger, lust, impatience, worry, anxiety, rebelliousness, alcohol, drugs, TV, video games, computer time,
 - a. In other words where do you go to get your joy, contentment, satisfaction, rest, peace, meaning, purpose, pleasure, escape?
 - b. The problem is that thee things are just symptoms—these things we generally call sins and idols are not the issue. Something else is.
 2. Tim Keller has been very helpful to us in coining the phrase “the sin behind the sin” or “the Sin beneath the sin” Darrian Patrick differentiates between near idols and Far idols. Another author speak of **surface idols** and **source idols**.

3. Note well that we will not be able to combat and remove idols from our lives until we learn to identify source idols, or the sin behind or beneath the sin. How can we do this?
 - a. We can ask ourselves seriously these questions:
 - i. What do I worry about the most
 - ii. what, if I failed or lost it, would cause me to feel that I did not even want to live?
 - iii. What do I use to comfort myself with when things go bad or get difficult?
 - iv. What do I do to cope? What are my release valves? What do I do to feel better?
 - v. What preoccupies me? What do I daydream about?
 - vi. What makes me feel the most self-worth? Of what am I most proud? For what do I want to be known?
 - vii. What do I lead with in conversations?
 - viii. Early on what do I want to make sure that people know about me?
 - ix. What prayer, if unanswered, would make me seriously turning away from God?
 - x. What do I really want and expect out of life? What would make me happy?
 - xi. What is my hope for the future? (From Darrin Patrick, Church Planter, pp. 161-162)
4. The four categories of source idols
 - a. Comfort
 - b. Approval
 - c. Control
 - d. Power
5. Identifying the source idol?
 - a. Comfort: Like only has meaning if I have this kind of pleasure (name it), experience, a particular quality of life.
 - i. What we seek: Comfort
 - ii. price we are willing to pay: Reduced productivity
 - iii. Greatest nightmare: stress, demands
 - iv. Others often feel hurt, left out
 - v. Problem emotion: boredom
 - b. Approval

- i. What we seek: approval, affirmation, love, relationship
- ii. price we are willing to pay: Loss of independence
- iii. Greatest nightmare: rejection, being unnoticed
- iv. Others often feel: smothered
- v. Problem emotion: cowardice, lack of courage—being myself really

c. Control

- i. What we seek: control, self-discipline, certainty, standards, perfection
- ii. price we are willing to pay: loneliness, spontaneity
- iii. Greatest nightmare: uncertainty
- iv. Others often feel: condemned, eggshells
- v. Problem emotion: worry

d. Power

- i. What we seek: power, success, winning, influence
- ii. price we are willing to pay: being burdened, responsibility
- iii. Greatest nightmare: humiliation
- iv. Others often feel: used
- v. Problem emotion: anger

c. greed/ materialism

- i. This too is a result of an idol
- ii.

d. injustice/ a lack of love for neighbor—we have to be careful here

- i. ignoring injustice and institutional injustice
- ii. making justice more important than the gospel.

7. Where is the gospel?

- a. Realize that you are an idolator
- b. Being an idolater is being a sinner
- c. Your sin is much bigger and deeper than you realize
- d. Bring it before God, name it, own it, reject it, confess it,
- e. Ask God to show you how to put this sin to death.
- f. Realize that no matter how long you have served this idol, God is anxious to have you come to his freedom
- g. Realize that no matter deep this idol is engrained in your system God offer you the promise and the hope of the Spirit of God living in you to put it to death and to uproot it.

- h. Realize that the battle has been waged and won
- i. Remember that no matter how big a sinner I am, Jesus is a bigger savior.
- j. Like John Newton "I know two things, I am a great sinner and Christ is a great saviour." **"John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy."**