

## AUGUST 31 SUMMARY SERMON - JOHN TSCHUDY

### SCRIPTURE LESSON Jeremiah 2:4-13, Hebrews 13:1-8, Luke 14:7-14

With these three texts I'm tempted to become very political in this sermon because the topics they all touch on are very much in the news today. But first I must make sure I cover them from a biblical perspective. Jeremiah is again speaking for God in asking the people of Judah and Jerusalem why they have turned away from God and following God's way. Was it something God did to them that caused them to go and worship the false gods and disobey God's command? I caught a bit of a TV preacher's sermon on the 10 Commandments and it was interesting to see the interpretations he put on some of them and which ones he didn't comment on at all. That's the problem we all have. We all interpret the scriptures and as a part of doing that usually we pick and we choose which texts are the ones we have to follow and which ones we can skip over. In that context God reminds the Jewish people and us of all that God has done for them and us throughout the ages. A key to understanding the Jewish religion is that things like the Exodus and the Passover were not just acts in history but rather things that modern day Jews and Christians are benefiting from. WE all are benefiting from ancestors going through the Ellis Island experience. Just like the people of Judah we are still putting things of this world ahead of doing the will of God and worshipping them as if they are gods even if they aren't. Further we are all part of the one family of Abraham receiving the promises God made to Abraham and expected to keep our end of the deal God made with Abraham.

One of the themes popular American Christianity tends to skip over in today's political climate is the idea of showing hospitality to strangers. This goes back in biblical teachings to the time of Abraham when three strangers appeared at Abraham's tents asking for food and water. At that time you were bound to give strangers hospitality because in the desert it could be a matter of life and death. In the case of Abraham's visitors it turned out that they were three angels sent by God to deliver a message from God to Abraham. But this basic decency of providing for strangers and welcoming them becomes throughout Jewish history and into Christian tradition a commandment of God that some groups within the Christian tradition still take very seriously. They still see the basic concept of showing hospitality may be a matter of life or death. Today we welcome many strangers to LOW and hopefully have shown them hospitality. That simple act may say more about the values we hold to than anything else we do. But on the other hand how our country treats other strangers that come to it seeking shelter and protection also speaks volumes about the values we hold when it is easier to stir up our fears to control our actions rather than our faith. The author of Hebrews reminds us that it is up to our leaders to set the standards and show us God's way. What is guiding our leader's paths? Is it fear, greed or Faith?

Our Gospel lesson is a reminder of how a Christian way of life is a life of humility. In Jesus' day social standing was very important and one must always be careful to maintain your proper standing. In this story Jesus uses the familiar theme of a banquet to make his point. When one attends a formal banquet one often has an assigned seat and one must be sure to find it and sit in one's proper place. The game in Jesus' Day was to attempt to sit higher in the order than you deserved but if you were caught you immediately were sent to sit at the lowest seat, and you were greatly embarrassed. But if you sat lower than your proper place the host was responsible to move you up to your proper seat in front of everyone and that would be a great honor. As Christians we are always not to seek out the places of honor unless we are taken to them. Rather we assume the seats at the lower end as is proper with the teaching of humility. How different this is today when status is everything even among clergy and congregations. Further when we are hosting a dinner we are to make sure we invite those in need, not just those whose presence brings honor to us. Worldly honor and status are not what we should be seeking. Rather we should be seeking out those things that bring honor to us with God not people.

How different this style of thinking is from what we see in America today and in the world today. Can America be considered a nation that fears and follows God by just going through the motions of church attendance, while ignoring things like justice, hospitality and charity, especially for those most in need? We are told that God expects us to give people justice, mercy and live in humility with each other and God. Does that describe modern day America? Are we living by the world's standards or by God's?