

SEPTEMBER 22, 2019 Summary Sermon-John Tschudy

Scripture Lesson Jeremiah 8:18-9:1, 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Luke 16:1-13

The Old Testament scripture lesson might be entitled “The pain of the prophet.” This is Jeremiah mourning over the fate of the nation because of their unfaithfulness to God. It appears that the invasion of the Babylonians is yet to happen but it is clearly on the horizon. So Jeremiah does what he will do often throughout his ministry. He feels that deep pain of grief for the nation being punished by God. There is nothing to comfort his grief and the pain that he feels. We also see indications that Jeremiah reflects the common beliefs of that day that a god, any god, including the God of Israel is tied to a specific people and geographic location. Remember that in Israel, since the kingdom began it was God that was the real ruler of the nation. The worldly king served at the behest of God but the real ruler of the nation was none other than God. Now it appears to Jeremiah that God in anger has left the nation as both the ruler and as God. The nation does not have a physical or spiritual ruler to guide it.

The text from 1st Timothy is often read as a part of a Thanksgiving service because it calls for prayers giving thanks for everyone and everything. Yes that includes Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi. Further the prayers should include giving thanks for such people. And the reason we should all pray like this is so “We may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.” The idea is if people pray that God’s spirit guides these folk, then perhaps God’s Will can rule in the world and be done. Too often people end up praying only for those things that are in their own self interest, not the things God wants to have happen. Too often today we like the people of Jeremiah’s time become more interested in following our own way not God’s.

In the end we read that God wants everyone to experience salvation and come to follow the one true God. We are also reminded that there is only one who stands before God on our behalf arguing that we are worthy of God’s forgiveness and that is Jesus Christ. Too often in the modern church different traditions impose themselves as the only true way to God, through Jesus Christ. The church imposes the human created traditions of doctrine and ritual between people and God and their tradition is the only one that knows the truth and uses the correct ritual to make people worthy of salvation. Here we read that it is God that is the only God and the only way to God is through Jesus not a specific set of the rituals and doctrine. Also notice that the writer of these letters considers themselves an Apostle, which means in the early church one who knew Jesus personally and one called by God and recognized by the church as an Apostle. Usually it was reserved for the original disciples and the one named to replace Judas. Later Paul on the basis of his face to face meeting with Jesus at the time of his conversion was included by the church as an Apostle.

The “Parable of the Dishonest Manager” is an interesting and troublesome text. Is Jesus saying that lying and cheating is acceptable behavior? A Superficial reading might indicate that. But in reality what Jesus is saying is from a worldly perspective the manager is a very wise man. But that the world’s perspective doesn’t usually match God’s perspective. The manager is securing for himself wealth in the world. But what happens when that wealth runs out and life runs out? The manager will not be welcomed into God’s eternal home, so maybe he will be welcome in the eternal homes of the people that cooperated with him?

In this parable we see how we live in this world determines what happens in the world to come. If we cannot follow God’s way in this world, how can we ever expect to live up to the standards of the world to come? Yet for too many today it is more important to live up to the standards of this world, the trends or the fads, then it is to follow God’s way. Reality is we cannot serve both the worlds standards and God’s standards because often they are very different. We have to choose one or the other and which one we choose shapes the world we live in now and forever.

God’s desire is to include everyone in salvation but we also need to hear the warning that comes through Jeremiah’s grief and realize that could also be our fate.