

JEREMIAH - GOD'S LAST CALL BEFORE THE JUDGEMENT
SERMON #3 "MEMORIES OF GOD"
by Pastor Jeffrey Miskus
Preached on the 3rd Sunday of Lent
Text: Jeremiah 2

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OUR CRUCIFIED, RISEN, AND ASCENDED LORD WHO IS NOT DEAD BUT ALIVE, WHO IS NOT IN THE TOMB BUT IS WITH US, HERE AND NOW WITH HIS LOVE AND HIS POWER, AS HE LIVES AND REIGNS AND THE GLORIOUS RIGHT AND OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. DEARLY BELOVED OF GOD.

Could you ever forget your children? how about your spouse? your parents? One of the most embarrassing moments you can have is when you know you should know a person - but you've forgotten them. And they are talking with you - and you are trying to remember - but you can't. WHAT ABOUT GOD? COULD WE FORGET GOD? IS IT POSSIBLE - IS IT CONCEIVABLE - THAT WE - GOD'S VERY OWN CHURCH COULD FORGET GOD? WE WHOM GOD HAS REDEEMED AND FORGIVEN - WE WHO HAVE BEEN WASHED WITH THE VERY BLOOD OF JESUS - IS IT POSSIBLE THAT WE COULD FORGET GOD?

In Jeremiah 2:32 God says to his church: "Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number."

"MY PEOPLE HAVE FORGOTTEN ME." - NOT JUST FOR A MOMENT - BUT DAYS WITHOUT NUMBER. Says the Lord.

Jeremiah chapter 2:1-3 begins with God bringing to mind one of his treasured memories concerning his people... God says, "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest"

Here we see the heart of God. His love for us - His passion for his people. As a groom adores his beautiful bride - SO GOD ADORES HIS CHURCH. WE ARE HIS - GOD HAS - SET US APART - WE ARE HIS PRECIOUS TREASURE.

DESPITE THIS GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT FORGOT HIM. IN FACT SO COMPLETELY DID THEY FORGET HIM THAT AS THE LAST OF HIS TRUE WORSHIPPERS DISAPPEARED NOBODY EVEN NOTICED. God says to Jeremiah in 2:8, "The priests did not ask, 'Where is the LORD?'

Those who deal with the law did not know me; the leaders rebelled against me."

What does it tell us about ourselves that we can so easily forget our Creator - our Saviour.

What does it say about us that we can so easily put out of our minds the one who lovingly gave us life and planned for our salvation?

In a desert water is the most precious commodity - it is life. The most valuable source of water in the desert is the free flowing spring. In the desert no one would be so foolish as to give up such a spring of water. - YET THIS IS WHAT GOD'S PEOPLE HAD DONE IN FORGETTING THE LORD.

The Lord said to Jeremiah, (2:13) "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."

Broken cisterns... A second source of water in the desert was rainwater that had previously been caught and channelled into large underground tanks called cisterns. Now to have a cistern crack and run dry means death. This was God's people's second sin. They had depended upon gods they had created - and when they called to these gods to save them - they came up dry. In Jeremiah 2:27-28 God says, "They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!' Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble!"

There is an important point to make here. When we forget God - when we put the Lord out of our minds - something automatically takes His place. Gods that we have created - the things we love, trust, or fear automatically take God's place. Don't fool yourself - when you put God out of your mind - you always replace Him with something. The greatest commandment is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30)

How many of us can recall times in our lives when we put God out of our minds - forgot Him?

When we are committing a wilful sin and we know it. We've planned it. And at the moment we begin planning to do it - we put God out of our minds - we try to forget him, THAT HE'S THERE WITH US - IN US The evil desire for that sin takes his place in our minds.

Sometimes we purposely forget God when we get together with a certain group of friends. Some people forget about God the day after their confirmation or their baptism. Sometimes things are just going so good in our lives - making money - family is stable - health is relatively good - and life is wonderful - WHAT DO I NEED GOD FOR RIGHT NOW. OR WE HAVE CERTAIN GOALS THAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH FIRST - THEN WE WILL THINK ABOUT GOD.

Of course we don't admit to ourselves that we've put God out of our minds "HE'S THERE... I BELIEVE IN HIM... WE TELL OURSELVES." WE CAN FOOL OURSELVES BUT WE CAN'T FOOL GOD. In the second chapter of Jeremiah God uses 4 images to show us what we are like when we try to forget him.

HE DOES THIS TO SAVE US, GET US TO SEE THE TRUTH AND RETURN TO HIM.

Now these images are shocking (PG). And remember they come from our Lord who treasures us - who called us as his bride - who adores his people.

When we put God out of our minds He compares us to a female animal in heat - a prostitute - a disgraced thief caught in the act - and a fool.

Jeremiah 2:23-25 reads, "You are a swift she-camel running here and there, a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving-- in her heat who can restrain her? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her. Do not run until your feet are bare and your throat is dry. But you said, 'It's no use! I love foreign gods, and I must go after them.'"

No self control whatsoever. Driven by sinful cravings like animals are driven by instinct. Each one of us can attest to times in our own lives when we acted like this... Found ourselves so angry we were out of control... So bitter we said hurtful things to others... So full of lust we shamed ourselves... So filled with pride that we hurt others without a care...

THEN God says, "Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, 'I will not serve you!' Indeed, on every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down as a prostitute." (Jeremiah 2:20)

God is our loving husband and when we forget him we are as unfaithful as a prostitute.

NEXT GOD SAYS "As a thief is disgraced when he is caught, so the house of Israel is disgraced" (Jeremiah 2:26) When we need help and can't get it from the gods we make - we shamefully called out to the Lord. WE ARE CAUGHT -

OUR CREATED GODS CAN'T HELP SO WE HAD TO CALL TO THE LORD. But that doesn't mean we are sorry for our sins - WE JUST WANTED HIS HELP FOR A TIME AND THEN WE FORGET HIM AGAIN - LIKE THE RICH UNCLE YOU CALL UPON ONLY WHEN YOU NEED SOME MONEY.

LASTLY God says, "Although you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me," declares the Sovereign LORD. "How can you say, 'I am not defiled;'" (Jeremiah 2:22-23)

When we put God out of our minds the last and final stage of this is a complete denial of sin. Not a denial that we sometimes make mistakes - EVERYONE WILL ADMIT THAT. BUT A DENIAL THAT WE HAVE DONE ANYTHING TO OFFEND GOD – THAT IS A CONFESSION OF SIN. When you put God out of your mind - then you can't see yourself doing anything to offend him. GOD SAYS IN JEREMIAH (2:34-35) "Yet in spite of all this you say, 'I am innocent; he is not angry with me.' But I will pass judgment on you because you say, 'I have not sinned.' Yet God's love for us is greater than our sins against Him.

God never stops loving us - even when we forget Him or put him out of our minds.

In Isaiah 44:21 God says to his people, "I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you."

We see God's love even in those unflattering images that he compared us to when we forget him. For with those shocking images God is calling to us - HE HASN'T FORGOTTEN OR FORSAKEN US. HE IS REACHING OUT TO BRING US BACK TO REALITY. TO SAVE US GOD SAYS, "LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE BECOME. REPENT AND I WILL HEAL YOU."

GOD NEVER FORGETS US - BUT THERE IS SOMETHING THAT HE DOES FORGET... In Hebrews 8:12 God says, "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." God forgets our sins - On the cross Jesus took away our sins - they are gone. All the times we acted like wild animals, prostitutes, thieves, and fools - Jesus has taken them away - and God has promised to remember them no more.

Jesus our Lord gave us his body and blood to eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins saying, "DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

And so like the thief on the cross beside Jesus - we come before his altar - REMEMBERING WHAT HE DID FOR US - confessing we've sinned - asking him to remember us - and He does.