

Jeremiah 18:1-11  
September 5, '10

"I WILL CHANGE MY MIND" GOD

PERHAPS YOU HEARD THE NEWS THIS PAST WEEK ABOUT THE REDUCTION OF A FOOTBALL PLAYER'S SUSPENSION.

HE HAD VIOLATED THE LEAGUE'S PERSONAL CONDUCT POLICY & BY ANYONE'S STANDARDS DESERVED TO BE PUNISHED.

THE INITIAL DECISION WAS THAT THE SUSPENSION WOULD BE FOR THE FIRST SIX GAMES OF THE SEASON. AS THE SITUATION WAS EVALUATED, THE COMMISSIONER DETERMINED THE PLAYER HAD DONE WHAT HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO DO & THE SUSPENSION HAS BEEN REDUCED TO FOUR GAMES RATHER THAN SIX.

THE COMMISSIONER CHANGED HIS MIND, MUCH TO THE DELIGHT & RELIEF OF THAT PLAYER.

IT HAS BEEN MADE CLEAR, THOUGH, THAT THE COMMISSIONER CAN CHANGE HIS MIND AGAIN IF THAT PLAYER DOESN'T CONTINUE TO LIVE UP TO THE STANDARDS EXPECTED OF HIM.

I THINK ALL OF THAT MAKES SENSE TO US.

SOMEONE CAN CHANGE THEIR MIND & WE UNDERSTAND IT.

WE ACCEPT IT.

IT SEEMS LOGICAL & RATIONAL.

BUT WHAT IF GOD DOES THAT?

WHAT IF GOD CHANGES HIS MIND?

WE'RE NOT SO COMFORTABLE WITH THAT, ARE WE?

YOU'RE NOT SURE WHY, BUT IT DOESN'T SIT WELL WITH YOU.

YET, THERE IT IS – RIGHT THERE IN THE PASSAGE WE JUST READ.

IT'S NOT THERE ONCE, BUT TWICE – VERSE 8 & VERSE 10.

GOD, SPEAKING THROUGH THE PROPHET JEREMIAH SAYS, "*I WILL CHANGE MY MIND...*"

YOU MIGHT FIRST THINK THAT I'VE TAKEN THIS OUT OF CONTEXT & THAT REALLY ISN'T THE INTENT OF THE PASSAGE.

THAT HAPPENS A LOT WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO USE THE BIBLE TO MAKE A POINT.

I HATE TO HAVE TO SAY THIS, BUT OUR BULLETIN COVER THIS MORNING IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE.

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL PAINTING WITH THE WORDS OF CHRIST EMBLAZONED ACROSS THE TOP.

*"CARRY THE CROSS & FOLLOW ME."*

THE ENTIRE VERSE, THOUGH, READS, "*WHOEVER DOES NOT CARRY THE CROSS & FOLLOW ME CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE.*"

THAT LEADS TO A MORE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING, DOESN'T IT?

WELL, THIS STATEMENT OF GOD – "*I WILL CHANGE MY MIND*" – HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT.

IT'S ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THE INTENTION IS EXACTLY WHAT IT SAYS.

BUT SOMEONE ELSE MAY BE QUICK TO REACT BY SAYING, “*HOLD ON A SECOND! THAT’S NOT WHAT MY TRANSLATION SAYS!”*”

WELL, IF YOU’RE READING THE KING JAMES VERSION, IT SAYS, “*I WILL REPENT...*”

OKAY, DOES THAT WORK ANY BETTER FOR YOU?

IS IT EASIER FOR YOU TO THINK OF GOD REPENTING THAN TO THINK OF GOD “*CHANGING HIS MIND?*”

SOMEONE, THOUGH, MIGHT SAY, “*WELL, I USE THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION & IT SAYS “I WILL RELENT” FOR THAT FIRST ONE & THEN “I WILL RECONSIDER FOR THE SECOND.*”

THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT THE HEBREW WORD THAT IS USED HERE IS THE SAME WORD THAT IS USED FOR “REPENT.”

IT SIMPLY MEANS “TO TURN” OR “TO CHANGE.”

I THINK THE INTENT HERE IS PRETTY CLEAR.

AND THIS ISN’T THE ONLY TIME WE FIND THIS WORD BEING USED IN CONNECTION WITH GOD.

THE MOST POWERFUL EXAMPLE IS IN THE BOOK OF JONAH.

REMEMBER THAT GOD HAD TOLD JONAH TO PROPHECY TO THE PEOPLE OF NINEVAH & TELL THEM THE CITY WOULD BE DESTROYED IN 40 DAYS.

BUT THE KING & ALL THE PEOPLE REPENTED & AS A RESULT – IN JONAH 3:10 – WE READ: “*WHEN GOD SAW WHAT THEY DID, HOW THEY TURNED FROM THEIR EVIL WAYS, GOD CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT THE CALAMITY THAT HE HAD SAID HE WOULD BRING UPON THEM; AND HE DID NOT DO IT.*”

NOW I KNOW THIS MAY BE A BIT UNNERVING TO SOME OF YOU.

SOMEONE CALLED THE CHURCH THIS WEEK – SOMEONE WHO’S NOT A MEMBER HERE – WITH GREAT CONCERN OVER WHAT THOSE WORDS ON OUR SIGN OUTSIDE MEANT.

WE’VE ALL SEEN THE QUOTES FROM GOD ON BILLBOARDS:

“*LET’S MEET AT MY HOUSE SUNDAY BEFORE THE GAME.*” GOD

“*KEEP USING MY NAME IN VAIN & I’LL MAKE RUSH HOUR LONGER.*” GOD

“*THAT ‘LOVE THY NEIGHBOR’ THING? I MEANT IT.*” GOD

WE CHUCKLE AT THOSE – AND DOZENS OF OTHERS.

BUT THIS ONE? – “*I WILL CHANGE MY MIND.*” GOD

THIS ONE DOESN’T SIT WELL, DOES IT?

LET ME SUGGEST THAT YOU SHOULDN’T BE AFRAID OF THIS IDEA – YOU SHOULD BE ECSTATIC AT THE THOUGHT OF IT!

WHAT THIS SAYS IS THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS NOT A STATIC ONE.

IT’S A DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE WITH OUR CREATOR.

GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING & THE EXAMPLE OF THAT FOOTBALL PLAYER & HIS SUSPENSION.

WHY DID THE COMMISSIONER CHANGE HIS MIND?

HE CHANGED HIS MIND BECAUSE THE PLAYER HAD CHANGED HIS BEHAVIOR.

AND WHAT IS IT THAT WOULD CAUSE HIM TO CHANGE HIS MIND AGAIN?

VERY SIMPLE – THE PLAYER’S BEHAVIOR.

IF HE DOESN’T DO WHAT’S EXPECTED OF HIM, HE’LL BE BACK IN THE SAME PREDICAMENT.

WHAT GOD IS SAYING TO & THROUGH JEREMIAH IS, “*WHAT YOU DO MATTERS TO ME. I HAVE CREATED YOU FOR A PURPOSE & MY BEHAVIOR TOWARD YOU WILL BE DETERMINED BY YOUR BEHAVIOR TOWARD ME.*”

IT’S LIKE ALL OF THOSE GLORIOUS “IF-BUT” PASSAGES THAT WE FIND THROUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LOOK AT THE WONDERFUL WAY THIS IS EXPRESSED IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF ISAIAH: “*COME NOW, LET US REASON TOGETHER, SAYS THE LORD: THOUGH YOUR SINS ARE LIKE SCARLET, THEY SHALL BE LIKE SNOW; THOUGH THEY ARE RED LIKE CRIMSON, THEY SHALL BECOME LIKE WOOL.*

*IF YOU ARE WILLING AND OBEDIENT, YOU SHALL EAT THE GOOD OF THE LAND; BUT IF YOU REFUSE AND REBEL, YOU SHALL BE DEVoured BY THE SWORD; FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HAS SPOKEN.*”

ISN’T THAT A BEAUTIFUL CONCEPT THAT IS PRESENTED IN THOSE OPENING WORDS – “*COME NOW, LET US REASON TOGETHER...*”

LET’S SIT DOWN TOGETHER & HASH THIS THING OUT.

YOU DO THIS & I’LL DO THIS.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS A DYNAMIC ONE.

WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD – WORKING TOGETHER TO BECOME THE PERSON GOD INTENDS US TO BECOME.

THAT’S WHY THIS IMAGE OF THE POTTER IS SO MEANINGFUL TO US.

FOR ONE THING, IT’S AN EXAMPLE FROM EVERYDAY LIFE.

FOR SOMEONE IN JEREMIAH’S TIME, THE PICTURE OF A POTTER SITTING AT HIS WHEEL IS SOMETHING THEY WOULD SEE ON A REGULAR BASIS.

THE WORK OF A POTTER WAS FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES.

WHEN WE THINK OF A POTTER TODAY, WE THINK OF SOMEONE BEING CREATIVE & DOING SOMETHING FOR ITS ARTISTIC BEAUTY.

A POTTER IN BIBLICAL TIMES CREATED ITEMS FOR PRACTICAL USE.

IT WAS A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

I THINK THERE’S SOMETHING TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS.

WHERE, IN OUR EVERYDAY LIFE, IS GOD SPEAKING TO US?

WHAT GOES ON AROUND US EVERY DAY THAT CAN SERVE AS A MESSAGE FROM GOD?

ARE YOUR EYES & EARS & HEART IN TUNE ENOUGH WITH THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF THE WORLD TO GLEAN A LESSON FROM THE MOST MUNDANE MOMENTS OF LIFE?

NOW THIS ISN’T TO SAY THAT JEREMIAH JUST HAPPENED TO PASS BY A POTTER ONE DAY & THOUGHT ABOUT THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF WATCHING HIM AT WORK.

NO, I BELIEVE THAT JEREMIAH WAS SENT BY GOD TO THAT POTTER FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF SPEAKING TO HIM.

BUT I THINK THIS ALSO TELLS US THAT WE NEED TO BE ALERT TO THE WORKING OF GOD ALL AROUND US.

WE NEED TO KEEP OUR HEARTS OPEN TO THE WAY IN WHICH GOD IS SPEAKING A WORD TO US.

ANOTHER REASON THIS IMAGE OF THE POTTER IS SO POWERFUL IS BECAUSE IT TELLS US GOD HAS A WONDERFUL PLAN FOR US.

GOD IS SEEKING TO MOLD YOU & SHAPE YOU INTO HIS MASTERPIECE.

HE HAS SOMETHING IN STORE FOR YOUR LIFE.

GOD LONGS TO BE YOUR PARTNER IN MAKING THAT PLAN BECOME REAL.

THIS PAST WEEK, EMMA SUE, HER FATHER & I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT WITH FAMILY MEMBERS IN MISSOURI & KANSAS.

WE TALKED ABOUT PEOPLE NO LONGER WITH US.

ONE OF THE QUESTIONS THAT WAS FREQUENTLY ASKED WAS, “*WHAT ONE THING DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT SO-AND-SO?*”

THE ANSWERS WOULD RANGE FROM “*HE WAS A CONSTANT COMPLAINER*” ABOUT SOMEONE TO “*SHE WAS THE SALT OF THE EARTH*” ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE.

HOW WOULD SOMEONE ANSWER THAT QUESTION IF IT WAS ASKED ABOUT YOU?

“*WHAT ONE THING COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT (INSERT YOUR NAME)?*”

WHAT WOULD YOU HOPE WOULD BE THE MOST FREQUENTLY-OFFERED RESPONSE TO THAT QUESTION?

IT’S AN INTRIGUING THOUGHT, ISN’T IT?

AND IT’S A FRIGHTENING ONE.

IT’S FRIGHTENING BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOU HAVEN’T BEEN EVERYTHING GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO BE.

THIS MESSAGE OF THE POTTER AND THE CLAY IS A BEAUTIFUL MESSAGE BECAUSE IT TELLS YOU THAT YOU ALWAYS HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE.

IT TELLS YOU THAT WHEN YOU HAVE FAILED - THAT WHEN YOU’VE LOST THE BEAUTY YOU ONCE HAD - THAT WHEN YOU HAVE GONE OFF ON A PATH THAT ISN’T HELPFUL – THAT EVEN THEN, GOD CAN REWORK YOU - GOD CAN SALVAGE YOU, AND MAKE YOU BEAUTIFUL.

AND IT TELLS US THAT IS GOD’S PURPOSE & INTENTION.

IT IS A WONDERFUL MESSAGE, BECAUSE IT TELLS YOU THAT GOD LABOURS OVER YOU LIKE THE POTTER AT HIS WHEEL.

WHEN THINGS IN LIFE SEEM DIFFICULT, WHEN EVERYTHING CAVES IN AROUND YOU & YOU FEEL LIKE A WORTHLESS LUMP OF CLAY, GOD’S HANDS ARE ALL AROUND YOU SEEKING TO DO A WONDERFUL THING *FOR YOU - AND TO YOU.*

GOD LONGS TO MAKE YOU A VESSEL OF HIS LOVE AND HIS BEAUTY.

**GOD DEEPLY DESIRES THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE YOU WHAT YOU WERE CREATED TO BE, SOMEONE WHO LIVES ABUNDANTLY AND LOVES EXTRAVAGANTLY.**

**GOD IS THE POTTER & WE ARE THE CLAY.**

**ALLOW GOD TO DO HIS WORK.**

**ALLOW HIM TO SHAPE YOU & MOLD YOU INTO THE PERSON GOD INTENDS YOU TO BE.**

**GOD LONGS FOR A DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP WITH YOU WHERE YOU CAN BE DISPLAYED TO ALL THE WORLD AS HIS MASTERPIECE. AMEN.**

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