

Live Above Board
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Jeremiah 7:1-15 (The Temple Sermon)

Opening questions for discussion:

I bet we could all agree that NON-Christians/unbelievers watch Christians like a hawk. Why do you think NON-Christians/unbelievers watch Christians like a hawk? They are watching to see if we are the REAL DEAL. Do we practice what we preach?

Fill in the blank: Many unchurched people say "I don't want anything to do with the church because the church is full of: _____." (Hypocrites)

As the old story goes, a family was hosting their pastor for lunch after church. The young mother, in an effort to display how they were teaching their 4 year old son in the way he should go, asked him to return thanks. "I don't know what to say" the little boy protested. "Just say what you've heard ME say" directed the Mom. Everyone bowed their heads and the little guy said: "Oh God...why on earth did I invite all these people over for lunch!"

On some level we're all guilty of acting one way in private and another in public. But REAL hypocrisy goes further than that.

The kind of hypocrisy Jeremiah is preaching against in today's scripture passage is ACTING HEAVENLY WHEN YOU'RE AT CHURCH AND LIVING LIKE HELL WHEN YOU'RE NOT.

Turn to Jeremiah 7 and let's get the picture of this scene in our minds in verses 1 and 2:

Jeremiah 7:1-2

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message:

"Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD.

Picture this. The temple in Jerusalem is filling up. And as they file in, this young prophet Jeremiah is posted at the GATE...the FRONT DOOR leading into the temple. And he's preaching a sermon outside before they get to the sermon inside.

Jeremiah 7:3-8

3 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. 4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" 5 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, 6 if you

do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, 7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. 8 But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

- Verse 3: He sums up his message in the opening line: REFORM YOUR WAYS AND ACTIONS and you can keep living here in Jerusalem. The IMPLICATION: If you don't, what happened to the NORTHERN KINGDOM will happen to the land of Judah...God will allow your enemies to capture your nation and take you into EXILE as SLAVES.
- Verse 4 is interesting. He REPEATS almost CHANTS "This is the temple of the Lord" three times.
- These people had stopped trusting in God and started trusting in the Temple.
- They believed that as long as the Temple stood in Jerusalem they were BULLET PROOF...their land would NEVER BE OVERTHROWN.
- In today's language: They thought "Hey, as long as I'm a church member I'll be fine!"

How sad it is to think about how many people are in church every week thinking they're "all set" when they are lost and headed for hell.

- In verse 5 Jeremiah begins to talk about how they have been living AWAY from the temple.
- He says you can fix this if you will CHANGE YOUR WAYS in these areas:
 - Deal justly
 - Don't oppress the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow
 - Don't shed innocent blood
 - Don't follow other gods
- If you REPENT and CHANGE you can continue to live in this land
- But look, (verse 8 says) "you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless."
- At this point I can use my imagination and picture that some of these people are shouting back at Jeremiah
- "We're not doing those things!"

So in verses 9-11 Jeremiah gets more specific:

Jeremiah 7:9-11

9 "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury,[a] burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"—safe to do all these detestable things? 11 Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD.

- You steal! You murder! You commit adultery! Perjury! You burn incense to Baal and worship idols.
- Then you come to church...MY CHURCH (Remember these are God's words through Jeremiah) and you think you're "SAFE" to do all these detestable things.

In other words, YOU ACT HEAVENLY IN CHURCH AND LIVE LIKE HELL EVERYWHERE ELSE!

- Verse 11 should sound familiar to us. Jesus quoted it once in a similar situation.
- "Has this house, which bears my Name become a den of robbers to you?"
- When did Jesus say essentially the same words? When he cleared the temple of the money changers. (Matthew 21:13)
- Why would robbers have a "den"? Is this where they come to watch TV and chill out?
- A "den of robbers" is the place robbers come after they've done the crime to be SAFE
- It's their HIDEOUT.
- These people believed they could live any way they chose out in the world and by coming to the temple and chanting a few words they'd be SAFE
- Back to verse 11: God through Jeremiah says "Not so fast!" "I have been watching!"
- Isn't it INCREDIBLE how we can DECEIVE OURSELVES into thinking we can hide our sins, yet we know GOD SEES EVERYTHING!
- Question: Parents, think about our kids. It's one thing when our kids act out behind our back and out of sight. But, when they do it knowing we're watching we've moved into IN YOUR FACE OPEN REBELLION. When they act out in plain sight knowing we're watching that's saying: "I don't care if you see me...I'm gonna do what I want even if I get caught!"
- Here's a thought: If Christians believe that God is all knowing and we live in a DELIBERATE PATTERN of SIN it's "in your face" REBELLION to God.
- Think about another example. A child who normally tries to do the right thing but sometimes just can't help it and they slip...then they look up and see that Mom or Dad are watching. If they're basically a good kid who tries to do the right thing what happens? "I'm sorry!" "I won't do it again!"
- We all slip. We all catch ourselves falling short in plain view of God. That's what GRACE is all about. Don't leave here today beating yourself up about that.
- But these SANCTIMONIOUS church-goers in Judah were living a DELIBERATE, CONTINUAL pattern of sin knowing God saw it all and THEY DIDN'T CARE.
- If you leave here like that today I hope you DO beat yourself up and can't sleep at night until it's fixed.
- In verse 12 Jeremiah reminds them of another place of worship.

Jeremiah 7:12-15

12 "Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel.

- Shiloh was the place where Joshua set up the first Tabernacle after taking over the Promised Land.
- But we read in 1 Samuel 4-6 that Eli's sons took the Ark of the Covenant into battle trying to use it as a secret weapon, and it was captured by the Philistines.
- As Warren Wiersbe writes: "Then God wrote ICHABOD over the tabernacle, which means in Hebrew the 'glory has departed'."
- Jeremiah reminded them that Shiloh was now a pile of rubble where the tabernacle had once rested.

13 While you were doing all these things, declares the LORD, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer. 14 Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your ancestors. 15 I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your fellow Israelites, the people of Ephraim.'

If they would not REPENT and CHANGE their ways they would receive God's punishment and be EXILED to a far place.

So What's The Takeaway?

- People are watching you and me to see if we're REAL. If our faith is GENUINE or a FAKE.
- We have to ask: Does my everyday life DEMONSTRATE that my faith is GENUINE?
- Do I live the same way out in the world that I do at church?

Since today is Fathers Day let me make one more point that I find convicting.

- Dads: Not only are UNBELIEVERS watching our lives as Christians, our children are watching to see if we're the same at home and at church.

When he was 39, John Maxwell penned a good definition of success:

"Success means having those closest to me love and respect me the most."

- Our kids and spouses know if our faith is genuine or not.
- Our family is influenced by how we live.
- If God would allow it, when my time comes, I'd pray that Susan and my kids could say "Dad lived up to Micah 6:8"

8 ...And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly[a] with your God.

- We all slip, we all fail, that's what GRACE is about.
- If we'll REPENT God will forgive.
- Asking for that forgiveness DEMONSTRATES that our faith is GENUINE.