

Sunday of the Holy Cross

17th September 2017

INTRODUCTION

The Cross: Symbol of God's Faithfulness and Forgiveness to his People

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

I. THE SCOPE OF FORGIVENESS IN THE CROSS

Poor Old Jeremiah – called to a wretched assignment:

- Sent to wayward and obstinate people
- Called to a life of rejection and loneliness
- Cast in prison and threatened with execution

Jeremiah's Situation in the Year 587 BC:

^{Jer 32:1} The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. ² At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah. ³ For Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him, saying, "Why do you prophesy and say, 'Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall capture it....'?" (Jeremiah 32)

His Perplexity:

^{Jer 32:8} "Then Hanamel my cousin came to me [Jeremiah] in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, 'Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. ..."

¹⁶ "After I [Jeremiah] had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD, saying: ¹⁷ 'Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. ¹⁸ You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to

their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts
21 You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror. 22 And you gave them this land, which you swore to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. 23 And they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do. Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them.... 25 Yet you, O Lord GOD, have said to me, 'Buy the field for money and get witnesses' -- though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.'" (Jeremiah 32)

God's Answer:

Jer 32:26 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 27 "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me? ... 31 This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight 32 because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah that they did to provoke me to anger-- their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 They have turned to me their back and not their face. And though I have taught them persistently, they have not listened to receive instruction. 34 They set up their abominations in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. 35 They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. 36 "Now therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence' (Jeremiah 32)

WHAT????

Jer 32:37 "Behold, I [God] will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. 38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.... "

Jer 33:7 "I [God] will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. 8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. 9 And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the

good and all the prosperity I provide for it.”¹⁰ “Thus says the LORD: ‘In this place of which you say, “It is a waste without man or beast,” in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man or inhabitant or beast, there shall be heard again¹¹ the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD: ‘Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!’ For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD....” (Jeremiah 32-33)

But Why?

Jer 33:15 “In those days and at that time I [God] will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’” (Jeremiah 33)

Astonishing forgiveness in the Cross yet to come!

What sin of yours can God not forgive in this Cross?

II. THE COSTLINESS OF THE CROSS

- It horrified Christ

⁴² ... saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22)

- It called forth the curse of Heaven

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"-- (Galatians 3)

- Yet, It evoked the mercy of the Father

¹⁹ For in [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1)

¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12)

III. LIFE-GIVING RESPONSES TO THE CROSS

Receive God's forgiveness:

- Guilt? – Because He suffered so deeply
- Shame? – He bore your humiliation in his own
- Regret? – Death can be turned into life

Give what you have received:

- No need for vengeance:

Joseph: "²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

- Do you understand what has happened to you?

1 Talent = 20 years wages for a worker

100 Denarii = 4 months wages for a worker

² Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³ who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. ¹⁴ For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103)