

Our Praise-Worthy God

Jeremiah 20:7-13

Introduction

Last week, Carol and I attended the Ordination and Installation service of Brian Nygaard at Trinity Memorial in Merrillville. He's fresh out of seminary and our newest pastor in Circuit 1. Between representatives from our Circuit, his relatives, home church, and professors, there were nearly twenty pastors vested and participating in support of Brian. It was a beautiful service, a time of great joy and celebration. It's easy to celebrate when things are going well, but what about when things go sideways? Jeremiah has some direction for us in our Old Testament reading today. Let's see how he handled it when the going was rough to say the least.

Jeremiah Feels Betrayed by God (v. 7)

In **verse 7**, Jeremiah accuses God of deceiving him. How did God deceive Jeremiah? In **chapter 1**, God told Jeremiah, *"I appoint you a prophet to the nations. ... See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant"* (**Jeremiah 1:5, 10**). From this, Jeremiah could reason that his message would be a negative one, but he thought he was going to be preaching it to other nations, not his own beloved Judah. It's one thing to have a negative message of gloom and doom. It's something else to have to deliver it to the people you love.

His Message Is Unpopular (v. 8)

In **verse 8**, all he is able to tell them is *violence and destruction*. People are tired of hearing the same message over and over. Sometimes, the delivery of the message was odd. Once, he wore a yoke to symbolize how Judah would be under the yoke of Babylon for seventy years. Once, he bought a waistcloth and hid it in the rocks by the Euphrates. Only to retrieve it sometime later to show how it was ruined. This would be the result of the Babylonian captivity. He became the laughingstock of the people.

How Is Compelled to Speak (v. 9)

So, he tried to keep silent, to not say what God had wanted him to say. Martin Luther said that he could not keep silent because his conscience was driving him. When God puts a word on our heart, He wants us to speak it. Sometimes our pain comes from trying to take the easy way out. Even if the Word of God is unpopular, speaking it is better than keeping it in and burning.

His Friends Turn Against Him (v. 10)

Even his own friends turn against him. People he thought to be his close friends were watching for his fall. They were seeking an opportunity for revenge. How can we praise God when close friends reject us? It's been estimated that after a forty-year ministry, Jeremiah had five people on his side. How can we praise God when it seems like we're all alone?

Yet, He Trusts the Lord (v. 11)

Yet, in all this, Jeremiah recognizes who the Lord is. Even though he feels like the Lord has deceived him, Jeremiah still trusts Him to be on his side. Jeremiah knows that God is in control and won't let his enemies prevail over him. We must remember that the Lord will never leave us or forsake us. He will stand beside us as a *dread warrior* (v. 11). This is the first step in praising God when things go sideways.

Jeremiah Prays for Deliverance (v. 12)

Based on this hope, Jeremiah prays for deliverance. He prays for God's vengeance to be visited upon his enemies because he is committed to God. With faith in God, we can turn to Him in prayer and ask for deliverance.

He Trusts God for the Future (v. 13)

Now, his attitude is one of praise and joy. He is already praising God for the deliverance that he knows is coming in the future. Our God is worthy of praise, even when the going is tough, and it looks like we are defeated.

Our Basis for Trust

We have the same hope and trust. Because Jesus died on the cross, we know we are forgiven and made whole. Because of His resurrection, we have life. Because He is God, He is still in control. We are reminded of this in the Lord's Supper. It is the body and blood of our crucified, risen Savior we feast on there. No matter what is happening to us, we can praise God because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
