



# Heed the Warnings: A Comprehensive Look at Jeremiah 5

September 24, 2023

Text: Jeremiah 5

We've broken down the chapter into six key sections, each revealing a different facet of the message God has for us today."

## Verses 1-5: The Search for Righteousness in Jerusalem

**Main Point: The moral decay of Jerusalem is so severe that not even one righteous person can be found.**

**Exegesis:**

- God instructs a search for a righteous person, echoing the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, to highlight the depth of Jerusalem's corruption.
- Both the poor and the wealthy are implicated, showing that unrighteousness cuts across social classes.

**Sermon Points:**

- **The gravity of collective moral failure.**
  - When God couldn't find even one righteous person in Jerusalem, it wasn't just an indictment against individuals but against the society as a whole. When righteousness becomes rare, everyone suffers. It's a collective failure, a societal breakdown.
    - 10 As it is written, There is **none righteous, no, not one**: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Romans 3:10-12
- **The role each individual plays in the spiritual health of a community.**
  - Let's not forget, a society is made up of individuals. Each of us contributes to the moral fabric of our community. If righteousness is lacking, we need to start by looking in the mirror.
    - 12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members

every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

In Genesis 18, we find a similar situation to Jeremiah 5.

## Verses 6-9: Consequences of Immorality and Unfaithfulness

**Main Point:** Immorality and unfaithfulness have consequences, symbolized by beasts and birds that will devour them.

**Exegesis:**

- The "beasts" and "birds" can be seen as metaphorical representations of invading forces.
- The people's sins have made them vulnerable to these "predators."

**Sermon Points:**

- **The real-world consequences of spiritual disobedience.**
  - Our spiritual choices have real-world consequences. When Jeremiah speaks of beasts and birds devouring the people, he's painting a vivid picture of vulnerability. Our collective sin makes us susceptible to all kinds of dangers.
    - 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Galatians 6:7-8
- **The danger of underestimating the impact of collective sin.**
  - Let's not underestimate this. When we turn away from God, we're not just making individual choices; we're contributing to a collective vulnerability. We're opening the door to chaos.
    - 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6

Are we so blinded by our own desires that we fail to see the impending dangers that our choices invite?

## Verses 10-13: Denial and False Prophets

Main Point: The people are in denial about the impending judgment, aided by false prophets.

Exegesis:

- Calls to "strip off" the vine and destroy the battlements symbolize the coming judgment.
- False prophets and priests contribute to the people's delusion.

Sermon Points:

- **The danger of false assurance.**
  - False assurance is a dangerous thing. When we surround ourselves with voices that tell us what we want to hear, we're setting ourselves up for a fall. We must be vigilant against false prophets who offer comfort without calling for repentance.
    - 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matthew 7:21-23
    - 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 2 Timothy 4:3-4
- **The responsibility of leaders to speak truth, even when it's uncomfortable.**
  - For those of us in leadership, the stakes are even higher. We have a responsibility to speak the truth, even when it's uncomfortable. Our role isn't to win popularity contests; it's to guide people in the ways of God.
    - 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: Ephesians 4:15
    - 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 2 Timothy 4:2

## Verses 14-17: The Instrument of Judgment (Babylon)

Main Point: God's word will consume the people, and Babylon will serve as His instrument of judgment.

Exegesis:

- God's word is likened to fire, emphasizing its consuming nature.
- The "ancient nation" (likely Babylon) is described as a fearsome force that will execute God's judgment.

Sermon Points:

- **The severity of God's judgment.**

- When God's word becomes a fire, it consumes everything in its path. God's judgment is severe, and we must take it seriously. This isn't a game; it's a matter of spiritual life and death.
  - 12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12
  - 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Romans 2:5
  - 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:30-31
- **The irony of God using a pagan nation to judge His own people.**
  - Let's not miss the irony here. God is willing to use even a pagan nation like Babylon to execute His judgment. When we turn away from God, we shouldn't be surprised when He uses unexpected means to get our attention.
    - 5 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Isaiah 10:5-6

## Verses 18-24: God's Mercy and Power

Main Point: Even in judgment, God's mercy is evident, but His power as Creator is ignored by the people.

Exegesis:

- God will not make a "full end," indicating His mercy and the possibility of future restoration.
- The people's sins include ignoring God's power in nature, symbolized by the seas and the seasons.

Sermon Points:

- **God's mercy in the midst of judgment.**
  - Even when judgment comes, God's mercy is still available. He doesn't make a 'full end' because His desire is for repentance and restoration. But mercy is not an excuse for complacency.
    - 22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23
- **The importance of recognizing God's sovereignty in all aspects of life.**
  - We must also recognize God's hand in the world around us. He controls the seas; He changes the seasons. When we ignore God's sovereignty, we're not just making a theological mistake; we're missing out on a fuller relationship with our Creator.

- 24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. 25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26 There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. 27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. 28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. Psalms 104:24-30

## Verses 25-31: Systemic Sin and Corruption

Main Point: Sin has infected all levels of society, from the judicial system to religious institutions.

### Exegesis:

- The "net" and "cage" symbolize the systemic nature of sin, capturing everyone in society.
- The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own authority, indicating religious corruption.

### Sermon Points:

- **The systemic nature of sin and its impact on society.**
  - Sin isn't just an individual problem; it's systemic. It infects our institutions, our laws, and our communities. And when sin becomes systemic, it traps us in a cycle of corruption that's hard to break.
    - 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Romans 3:23
    - **4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity**, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. 5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Isaiah 1:4-6
- **The role of religious institutions (Churches, Denominations, Seminaries, Church Fellowship Groups) in either perpetuating or combating systemic sin.**
  - Our religious institutions aren't immune to this. They can either be part of the problem or part of the solution.
    - **8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good**; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:8
    - 23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. 25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are

full of extortion and excess. 26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Matthew 23:23-28

- 27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. James 1:27

Brothers and sisters, as we've journeyed through Jeremiah 5 today, we've encountered a series of sobering themes that resonate not just for an ancient people but for us today. We've talked about the desperate search for righteousness in a society that seems to have lost its moral compass. We've discussed the dangers of collective immorality and the false guidance that can lead us astray. We've seen the impending judgment that comes when a society ignores God's warnings, and we've also seen that even in the midst of judgment, God's mercy is available for those who turn back to Him.

But we ended on a cautionary note, highlighting the root causes of societal downfall: a refusal to repent and a willingness to tolerate injustice and falsehood. These themes serve as a mirror for us today, reflecting the state of our own hearts and our own society.

## So what does this mean for us, practically speaking?

**Individual Accountability:** Each of us needs to examine our own lives. Are we living righteously, or are we contributing to the moral decay around us?

**Community Responsibility:** As a church, are we a beacon of truth and justice, or have we allowed falsehood and injustice to seep into our community?

**Discernment:** In a world filled with mixed messages, we must be vigilant. Test everything against the Word of God, and hold fast to what is good.

**Repentance and Reconciliation:** If we find ourselves or our community straying from God's path, it's never too late to repent and seek reconciliation, both with God and with those we've wronged.

**Action:** Faith without works is dead. Let's be a people who not only hear God's Word but act on it, seeking justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.

As we leave here today, let's not forget the lessons from Jeremiah 5. It's a chapter filled with warnings, but also with hope—hope that comes from a God who is just, but also merciful; a God who warns, but also redeems. Let's be a people who heed those warnings and seek that redemption, today and every day. Amen.