

There is bad kind of anger and a good kind of anger.

There is a bad kind of coveting and a good kind of coveting.

There is a bad kind of boasting and a good kind of boasting.

The good kind of boasting we talk about today. Good boasting is telling about God's love and justice. Good boasting is praising God for His character. This sort of boasting is done by the wise. Christians boast. Preachers boast. Preaching is boasting. It is proclaiming who God is and what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

What about when things are going poorly? Can we still boast of God when everything is going wrong? Yes. Especially when things are going wrong. More especially when things are going wrong on a global scale. Then, and especially then, the wise will boast in God.

God instructs the wise what to do when both church and society break down.

1. The wise are able to explain the ruin. (v.12-16).

Back in verse 10, the cattle and beasts of the field had fled and were gone, and even the birds of the air flew away. No one used the pastures. In verse 11, the city was a heap of ruins having only jackals wandering around, and no humans. It seems that we have Jeremiah weeping, and God weeping, a fore-shadowing of God the Son coming into Jerusalem and weeping for her ruin.

Verse 12, "*Who is the man so wise that he can understand it?...Why is the land ruined and laid waste...?*" Because sin leads to death.

This is how the wise explain the ruin. As the LORD Himself says in verse 13, "*Because they have forsaken My law that I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice or walked in accord with it.*"

The people were headstrong and insisted on living by pagan customs rather than living by the covenant of God.

Verse 14, the people "*...have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their fathers taught them.*" The Baals were fertility gods, which were false gods to which the people of God were attracted because they liked the lewd practices. They followed their hearts. They wanted to get involved in these things, because they considered it fun.

Who taught them that it was fun? The previous generation. Their fathers and mothers.

But God's law had always been clear. Even when people are led astray by their leaders, they are culpable for their wanderings, as God had said from the start. Not going after the Baals or any carved images, as was explained right within the founding words of the Ten Commandments, in as we repeatedly read from Exodus 20:5, "*You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me...*" Why is there ruin? Because of the sins of the fathers and mothers, being learned and repeated by the sons and daughters. All must be punished.

Do you think the same God has the same operations today? The wise know that the answer is yes. Romans 6:23 confirms what has always been true, which stands behind the ruin that we see today, "*The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

Or, as Jeremiah spoke words of wisdom, to explain the coming exile, he said, in verses 15-16, "*Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed this people with bitter food, and give them poisonous water to drink. I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.*"

The wise are able to explain the ruin. Sin leads to death. Faith in Jesus leads to eternal life. Why don't people turn to Jesus and live? That brings us to our second point.

2. The wise respond to large quantities of the dead with proper grieving. (v.17-22).

Sin leads to death. A lot of sin leads to a lot of death.

Jeremiah now describes death and widespread death. Death is described here as the grim reaper. That is, death comes to everyone.

In verse 17, God tells them to "*...call for the mourning women to come...*" These were professional mourners. It is not an American thing. But in the Middle East, even today, women are paid money to follow the casket and let out a high-pitched shrieking. They are skilled at making everyone cry. Verse 18, the goal is stated that "*...our eyes may run down with tears and our eyelids flow with water.*" Verse 19, "*...a sound of wailing is heard...*" Verse 20, "*Hear, O women, the word of the LORD, ... teach your daughters a lament, and each [teach] to her neighbor a dirge. [a sad song].*"

In Matthew 9:23, Jesus came to the home of a dead person and saw the flute players, which were some of these professional mourners, and Jesus dismissed

them. Why? Because, Jesus said, “*the girl is not dead, but sleeping.*” Jesus was working the miracle of raising her from the dead, so the professional mourners would not be needed that day. What a picture of the hope of life that is coming through Jesus.

Back to our study of Jeremiah 9, now in verse 21, widespread death is personified as a burglar breaking into every house! Death not only prowled the streets, but climbed in the windows. Death enters the streets, cutting off children, enters the town squares, cutting off young men, and entered every home, even the palaces. In verse 22, even the farm fields are strewn not with the farming harvests and not with the manure, but rather with the dead bodies of people. These verses do not spare us the desolation, the scattering, the weeping.

The point is that death is inescapable, and the pervasive presence of death requires the pervasive presence of grief.

3. The wise recognize proper and improper boasting. (v.23-26).

When jewelers put out diamonds, they first set a backdrop of black velvet. When God puts out jewels of wisdom, He first set a backdrop of dark death.

Wisdom can be seen for what it is, against this scene of death.

When death is all around us, what should be our source of boasting? If we are wise and understand, what remains that can bring us solid joy and lasting treasure?

Not our own riches, for it all goes away when we die. Not our own strength, for we all die. Not our own wisdom, for we could not prevent our deaths. As the LORD says in verse 23, to boast in our own riches, our own strength, or our own wisdom is improper boasting that ought not to be done. It is foolish.

Instead, if we boast, we have to boast properly. Verse 24, “*let him who boasts, boast in this, that he understand and knows Me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth...*”

This is the good kind of boasting. We understand why people die. We know the LORD God Himself in a personal relationship. We know the character of the LORD is love and justice, and what is right. We are not undone by death, rather we are built up by knowledge of God.

What fades away? Man’s wisdom, human might, and this world’s riches
What does not fade away? God’s love, God’s justice, What God says is right.

God gives us these as a gift. God gives us His love. God gives us His justice in a world that makes sense. God gives us what is right and wrong in the world that He made, He sustained, He redeems, and He will evaluate.

Verses 25-26 are God's final evaluation. God will punish those with fake wisdom. Those with only man's wisdom. Those with the pretense of religion, and no true relationship with God. God will punish those who became circumcised, but for them it was just an external. At the end of verse 26, we have the verdict, "all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart" which means that it is not a true repentance. For the people of God to be lacking repentance is just as bad as the nations who lack circumcision. The value was not the external trappings of religion, such as circumcision and baptism. The value is in the internal understanding of God and the internal knowledge of the LORD God.

To boast in religion is improper and foolish.

To boast in our God is proper and wise.

Later Paul wrote profoundly in Romans 2:28-29, "*...no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter...*" This fact applies equally to baptism.

The problem is externalism. Being a Christian only in an external way.

Yet it still continues today.

People attend and sing, or livestream from home, and the words only get as far as our ears and our vocal chords. Does it touch our hearts? Are we drawn closer to God?

Our Lord Jesus said in John 17, when He was praying to God the Father about how people draw close to God, said this in John 17:3, "*...this is eternal life, that they KNOW YOU THE ONLY TRUE GOD, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*" Eternal life is knowing God the Father and knowing the One He sent, which is Jesus Christ. To know God means life itself. To know God is wisdom. To know God is to recognize that we all should be praising God.

Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "*since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.*"

1 Corinthians 1:30-31, "*...you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'*"

Conclusion:

Story of Dr. John Skilton. Humble. Boasts only in the Lord.

- 1) Lament the sin which ruins churches and societies. When people walk away from God and serve other gods, it leads to judgment, separation from God, and death. Judgment is inevitable. There is a final judgment coming. All will stand before God to give account of their lives. People have no hope of being good enough to stand before God and be accepted for their own lives. Lament the sin which ruins.
- 2) Be wise and boast in the Lord. In Jeremiah's day, the people needed to fall, because there was no power to obey God. But the church of Jesus Christ in the New Testament has a different future. We are in the New covenant, so Christ had died the death that we needed to die. He died for us. And Christ rose again. So, we are fundamentally different from the audience for Jeremiah – the people in ancient Jerusalem. We have the resurrection power of Christ at work in us. Through Christ, we are forgiven and accepted. In Christ, we are more and more enabled to live holy lives. We know God! Ephesians 1:17-18, "*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints...*" We boast in the Lord, because we know the Lord. We live for God, and are enabled to live for God. Romans 8:4, Christ came "*...in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*" Boasting is praising the LORD. This is how wise people boast – we give proper credit to Christ for who He is and what He has done. Be wise and boast in the Lord.

LET US PRAY: Father, give us eyes to see that death is coming to all. Give us a deeper appreciation that life comes to all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Make us wise, and receive our praise. Help us to only boast in Your grace. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.

Why is there sorrow in places of devastation?

How consistently is death the wages of sin? Romans 6:23

Why would societies have professional mourners? Matthew 9:23

In what way can Christians boast? 1 Cor. 1:18-31 2 Cor 10:17

MORNING WORSHIP – 10:45 A.M.

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Apostolic Greeting

*Call to Worship _____ Psalm 113:1-3

*Invocation and The Lord's Prayer

*H.#624, *Through All the Changing Scenes of Life*

***Westminster Shorter Catechism 107** (p.877)

*Response Song (rotates monthly, music cmte)

Resp. Reading (back of bulletin) _____ Psalm 34:1-8

Response Song _____ #39, Give Praise to God

Offering and Offertory

~~Special Music~~

Congregation at Prayer

*Hymn #252, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

Scripture _____ Jeremiah 9:12-26

Sermon _____ How Wise People Boast

*Hymn#576, *Awake, My Soul, Stretch Every Nerve*

*Benediction _____ Psalm 14:7

*Doxology (rotates weekly, music cmte)

*Postlude

Suggested words for Children's bulletin:

BOAST

WISE

MOURNING

SADNESS

LOVE

Sermon notes:

Ben's Translation:

(v.18), "My smiling, my grief is upon me, my heart is faint within me."

(v.19), "Behold, the sound of a cry for help from my people, from a distant land, 'Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her king within her? For what reason have they provoked Me with their graven images, with idols that are foreign?'"

(v.20), "has passed the harvest, finished is the summer, and we are not delivered."

(v.21), "for the brokenness of the daughter of My people, I am broken, I am blackened, horror has taken hold on me."

(v.22), "Is there not balm in Gilead? Is there no healer there? Why for what reason has not been brought up the restoration of My people?"

(ch.9v.1), "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes were springs of tears, that I might weep day and night for the pierced of the daughter of My people."

(ch.9v.2), "Oh that I had in the desert a traveler's lodging place, that I might go and leave my people, and go from them, all are adulterers, an assembly of treacherous people."

(ch.9v.3), "As they bend their tongue like a bow, deception and not steadfastness has grown strong in the land, because evil to evil they proceed, and with Me they do not know, says the LORD."

(ch.9v.4), "Every person from his neighbor be on guard, and upon all of the brothers do not put your trust, because every brother attacks, and every friend goes about as a slanderer."

(ch.9v.5), "Everyone his neighbor deceives, and truth does not speak, and his tongue words of deception, and wearies himself on iniquity."

(ch.9v.6), "'Sitting in the middle of deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know Me,' declares The LORD."

(ch.9v.7), "thus says The LORD of hosts, 'Behold! I will refine them and I will assay them, what else can I do, for my people?'"

(ch.9v.8), "their tongue is as an arrow shot out. It speaks deceit; with his mouth speaks peace to his neighbor, in the purpose speaks inward, he sets an ambush."

(ch.9v.9), "shall I not on these attend them," declares The LORD, "If a nation such as these not avenge Myself?'"

(ch.9v.10), "The mountains take up weeping and wailing, and for the pastures of the wilderness a dirge, because no one can pass through them, and not hearing the voice of the cattle the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled and are gone."

(ch.9v.11), "I will make Jerusalem a heap, a dwelling of jackals, the cities of Judah I will give a devastation, a wearing out, without inhabitant."

Chart:

18 – grief

19 – A the LORD in Zion B King in her C should serve Him, not idols.

20 – proverb – harvest is over, not saved!

21 – my people mourn, I mourn.

22 – help is nowhere to be found

9v.1 – he could cry all day and night

9v.2 – Jeremiah would like to run from the people

Psalm 55:6-7

9v.3 – falsehood has grown strong in the land! Shoot lies. Proceed evil to evil. 1 Sam 2:12
9v.4 – brother deceives brother. Jacob! Genesis 27:36
9v.5 – everyone deceives others, they wear themselves out doing wrong.
9v.6 – deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know Me, says God.
9v.7 – God must refine them. Isaiah 1:25
9v.8 – their tongue speaks deceitfully *Psalm 55:21*
9v.9 – punishment is necessary
9v.10 – Jeremiah will weep for the desolation of the country Luke 21:5-24
9v.11 – widespread apostasy must bring God’s punishment.

12 – wise – why is the land laid waste?
13 – because they have forsaken God’s law
14 – they have gone after the Baals
15 – I will feed this people with bitter food
16 – I will scatter them, I will send the sword

17 – call for the mourning women
18 – raise a wailing for us
19 – sound of wailing, because we have left the land
20 – hear, O women, the word of the Lord, teach your daughters a lament
21 – death has come up into our windows
22 – the dead bodies...shall fall like dung in an open field

23 – let not wise man boast in his wisdom, rich not boast in riches
24 – boast –that He knows Me – I practice love, justice, righteousness – In these I delight
25 – day coming when I will punish the uncircumcised in heart
26 – all the nations are uncircumcised, and Israel uncircumcised in heart.

How Wise People Boast

God instructs the wise what to do when both church and society break down.

v.12 – 16, the wise are able to explain the ruin

v.17 – 22, the wise respond to mass deaths with proper grieving

v.23 – 26, the wise recognize proper and improper boasting

Revision:

Notes:

Titles:

Previous sermon:

Longer version of the sermon: