

Jeremiah Study

Chapters 17 - 19 (45~min)

- The people aren't "listening", so God is going to have Jeremiah "show" them in a different way.

Chapter 17

(17:2) **Sin is perverted.**

- Many of these worship acts were lewd and/or gruesome & it was common for their children to be present observing these acts.

(17:3) **Sin takes plunder.**

- For Judah, their land & wealth were given as plunder because of their sin.
- Sin in our lives also takes plunder. Examples:
 - Addiction often takes loved ones, jobs, housing, health
 - Sexual immorality often takes health (STD)
 - Pride, Greed & Selfishness often take relationships

(17:4) **Sin is a prison**

- It leaves us in a place we don't know, serving enemies that don't care about our well-being.

(17:6) The cursed tumbleweed

- In our modern culture, it seems crazy how easily swayed people are & even how quickly they pivot from one topic to another. The "tumble weed" imagery seems very relevant today & we can see this is because:
 - **They trust in Man** (themselves, their cause, governments, science, technology,)
 - **Rely on Flesh for Strength** : (worldly things, titles & authorities)
 - **Heart departs from the Lord**: (The don't know nor follow the Lord)

(17:7-8) The promise for us (Be Rooted)

- Do:
 - Trust in the Lord
 - Hope in the Lord
- The blessing:
 - Not moved (rooted deep, not swayed)
 - No Fear (in the heat)
 - No Anxiety (in the drought)
 - Fruitful (Fulfills purpose)

(17:9-10) The heart is deceitful

- Feelings can be deceitful.

(17:14-18) Jeremiah is planted in the midst of this situation, and we can see that he is concerned.

- He's reminding God that he has not partaken in the sinful ways, that his heart is pure
- He's reiterating his love & commitment to God
- He's concerned that those around him want to destroy him
- He's asking God to protect him.

(17:19-27) Judah had neglected the Sabbath.

- NOTE: While this is showing their neglect of the Sabbath day, we will also see in the 70-week prophecy that they were neglecting the Sabbath year also.

Chapter 18

(18:1-11) The Potter's Hand

- (v10) We see God say that He can/will "relent" (change direction) based on the choices of His people. (i.e. If you do *this* then I'll do *that*, but if you do *this* then I will do *that instead*)

Fun Facts:

The concept of working clay on a wheel gives us a very deep understanding in this fairly short passage.

1. Start with a Lump of Clay

- a. You tear a chunk of clay from the bucket of clay. Choosing a size for the vessel that you want to work. You take more than you need because you will lose some in working & you can always cut away excess.

God grabs us (the lump of clay) & separates us. He has a plan for what we will become, so he knows just how much clay to use.

2. Roll into a ball

- a. All vessels start the same. A roughly formed ball.

We all start out the same. Bowls and candle sticks all look alike at this point.

3. Center the Clay

- a. The ball isn't perfectly round, so when you first smush it onto the wheel, it will wobble as the wheel spins. Using both hands, you firmly cup the ball and put pressure in all directions until the clay becomes equally round.
 - i. When the clay is properly centered, it will cease to wobble.
 - ii. This process also removes any air bubbles that might be in the clay

Do you ever feel like you're wobbling through life? Imbalance is what causes this on the wheel, and that is often true in life as well. Pray & lean into God who centers us. Remember, that will require some pressure to achieve, but also remember that the harder the clay fights *against* His hand, the *more* pressure it will require to do so.

4. Sprinkle Water

- a. The clay needs to be the right consistency. The water allows the clay to slide in the hand. Not enough water & the clay will catch, tear, unbalance. Too much water & the clay becomes too soft to hold form (Wobbles, tears, falls apart)
 - i. To Dry: Add more water, slowly
 - ii. To Soft: Cut it off and let it dry before resuming.

Think of the water as blessings. As God pours into us, our consistency changes. The example we see in Jeremiah is that Judah had been so saturated in blessing for so long that they failed to hold their form. Instead, weakened and soggy, they collapsed into idolatry.

We also see that God is going to "dry" them through this trial & will eventually bring back what's left of them to resume His work.

5. Building Up:

- a. Once the clay is centered, you use your fingers to begin hollowing out the vessel. This part requires moderate pressure to make the clay move. As the clay is moved from the inside center, the fingers glide with gentle pressure to move the clay up (to build up the sides)
 - b. Repeat this process until the vessel walls are:
 - i. Less than an inch thick (closer to 1/4-1/2 inch typically)
 1. If the clay is too thick it will explode in the kiln (heat)
 - ii. Consistent thickness throughout
 1. If the vessel has different thickness throughout, it will crack during the drying process.
- This is the fun part. It is where a vessel starts to take form and you begin to see what it will be. Will it be tall (perhaps a pitcher)? Or wide (perhaps a bowl)? It takes a lot of TIME and WORK before you can really tell what it's going to be, but you can see it take shape.
 - Is God calling you to do something seemingly small (like start a bible study, or gather donations for a charity?) That might just be the start of what He is wanting to shape in your life.
 - Like pottery, when we are too "thick" (stubborn or prideful), we will explode when the heat comes.
 - We see this in Jeremiah where the people "Stiffened their necks" and "refused to listen to God's word".
 - Also like pottery, if parts of our life are inconsistent, we will crack in the drought.
 - We see this too. Judah had mixed their worship between God & idols.
 - We see this today when ministries become plagued with scandal.

- Sometimes, for us less skilled artists, we start with the intent of making one thing (i.e. a tall pitcher), but the clay (in fighting against us) does something else (i.e. becomes a wide bowl).

6. Tearing down:

- a. Sometimes in the build up process something goes wrong. If an air bubble made it this far into the process, it will destroy what has been built up. The only option is to push it (with moderate pressure) back down and start building up again.
 - i. Some defects cause a complete tear down back to the centering step
 - ii. Milder defects may only require moderate rework where the clay is pushed down a bit and then built back up.

This process is never fun. It is a move backwards. But it is necessary unless you want to completely scrap (throw out) the whole thing and start with new clay.

Had the people of Judah heeded God's word & repented, God wouldn't have needed to press them completely down and start back from step 1. But they didn't. God kept his promise to Abraham by not throwing out the entire lump of clay.

- God also cut out "bad" parts of the clay.
 - Sometimes, there may be a chunk of inconsistent clay. Like a chunk of dry or hard clay. This can't be used, it must be cut out. We see this in the prophesy that many will die by sword & famine. Those that go into captivity will remain on the wheel (for a time)

7. Drying:

- a. Once the vessel is complete, it has to be removed from the wheel.
 - i. Dry step #1: let it dry a bit (but not completely) This dries to a point where it can hold form to be moved & set upside down so that the bottom can be trimmed with a knife. This is often the time & place where the artist places their mark on the vessel.
 - ii. Dry step #2: now the piece needs to set and completely dry. If any moisture exists when the device is placed in the kiln (heat) it will explode.

This is a "waiting" process. We will see that Judah waits 70 years in captivity as they dry out.

For us, when we feel like we need to move, but God isn't moving yet, perhaps we are "drying". This is important if we are going to survive the next step.

8. Firing (The Kiln, extreme heat)

- a. Firing #1: Lower temperature that hardens the vessel.
 - i. After this point is where paint or glaze are applied to the vessel.
 - b. Firing #2: High Heat - This completes the process & causes the paint/glaze to bond to the vessel.
- Can you take the heat? This is trial by fire. If you are crafted properly, it will strengthen you and make you into your most beautiful self.
 - If you are NOT crafted properly, you will break or explode.

(18:12-17) They reject this message.

(18: 18-23) They plot against Jeremiah

Chapter 19

The vessel is shattered

(1:14) Field Trip.

- Gather:
 - Elders of the people
 - Elders of the priests
- Go: To Tophet (aka "Valley of the Son of Hinnom")
 - This is where they performed:
 - Burning incense to idols
 - Shedding of innocent blood (human sacrifice)
 - Child Sacrifice
 - God renames this "The Valley of Slaughter"
- What God's Gonna do:
 - Make void the counsel of Judah & Jerusalem
 - Cause them to fall by the sword
 - Scatter their corpses for birds & beast to feast on
 - Make this city desolate (in an unbelievable way)
 - Starve them to the point of cannibalism

(v5) NOTICE: When God mentions child sacrifice, He often elaborates something along the lines of "which I did not command, nor came to my Heart, nor came to My mind".

- Interesting that we don't really see this distinction in the other idolatrous worship, including human sacrifice. But is fairly consistent when mentioned Child Sacrifice.