

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. All right, so in Jeremiah we have an interesting little phrase here, a little section where he is talking about him. He understands the will of God, but what he doesn't understand is that the people would not listen and they were out to destroy him. And so what does he do? He prays for God's vengeance upon the people. Now, Jeremiah is an interesting prophet. It's not that his message was unusual. The message of all the prophets was repent of your sin, repent of your rebellious nature, of your wicked tongue, of your worshiping false gods, of your jealousy and follow after the one true God of Israel. That was the message of all the prophets. Jeremiah had the unique opportunity to be there when God finally did bring about the destruction of the nation.

It had been prophesied by multiple prophets, but Jeremiah was actually the prophet that got to see it. And the people did not like what was going on, and they blamed Jeremiah for it. They blamed the messenger, not the message. And so they threw him in a pit and they treated him awfully. And so he prayed that God would send his vengeance upon him. Now, if you read this, you can hear kind of in the future, you can hear Jesus, that the people desired to cut Jesus off from the land of the living, that his name might be remembered no more.

So in some ways, Jeremiah is a prophet who is also speaking about what's going to happen to Jesus. The people will reject his message. The people will not listen to the message of repentance. And so in many ways, Jesus is also calling upon the Father to bring about the vengeance of God upon... Well, this is where it gets different, the vengeance of God upon the unrighteous. Now if we're honest with ourselves that vengeance is what you and I and everybody else, Jeremiah's people and us, we all deserve the vengeance of God.

And yet how does God actually send his vengeance? He sends it upon his son Jesus Christ. He puts all of his wrath, all of his righteous indignation against the evils and sins of this world, and he puts it upon Christ. And so the vengeance of the Lord was given not to us, thank God, but to Christ. And because of that, we have hope, we have peace. Now, the disciples didn't understand that was what was going on. And when Jesus tries to explain it to them, they have no clue. They're going around arguing about who's the greatest in the kingdom. We're going to get to that in a little bit with James, who's the greatest in the kingdom, and he pulls a little child in their midst. And this word for little child in Greek means anything from an absolute newborn to a toddler.

So he says, unless you receive each other like this little child, if you receive a little child, you receive me, and if you receive me, you receive the one who sent me. In other words, we are called to be gentle with one another. Those who are childlike in the faith, those who have no understanding, those who are different than us, we

are to receive with grace, not with jealousy or anger or fear or gossip, but with grace. God wants us to understand what he did for us. Now, he tried to explain that to the disciples, look, the son of man is going to be delivered and killed and then he's going to rise after three days and they did not understand the message.

Now we, when we look at that message, go, what's there not to understand. He's going to be delivered to men, he's going to die and he's going to rise from the dead in three days. Seems pretty straightforward. There's not a parable there. There's pretty straightforward sentences, but the disciples did not understand. Why did they not understand? They didn't understand because this is the man who walks on water. This is the man who heals the blind and the deaf and the lame. This is the man who casts out demons. This is the man who raises the dead back to life. How in the world is this man going to be killed?

It's just not going to happen. He must be speaking in some sort of parable because it couldn't be obviously the words that he actually spoke. I mean, they just didn't understand. They didn't understand that the vengeance of God needed to be paid and rather than we paying the debt, the son of God was going to pay it, and then he was going to give that as a gift to us so that we no longer need fear the vengeance of God, but we can receive his grace and his mercy and we can receive the confidence that we as little children can trust him for everything.

But we don't do that very well, do we? And this is where James comes in, who is wise in understanding among you. The implication is not many of us are wise in understanding because a good conduct is shown in our works and meekness and wisdom. Yet how many of us are truly meek? How many of us act in jealousy and selfish ambition? How many of us are in the middle of strife? How many of us are jealous of what happens to other people? How many of us gossip about other people behind their backs because we don't like what they're doing or something? How many of us have created, been in a strifeful situation, even in the church, because we're not gentle with each other, because we're not forgiving of one another, because we're silently judging them for not doing things the way they should or they're doing something that we think we should be doing or whatever it is, or we're thinking that they're getting the praise and we're not, or that they get the credit and we don't.

How often do we create strife because we're not getting what we think we deserve? We as Christians are called to be pure and peaceable, gentle and open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. We're not called to talk about people behind their backs. We're not called to be jealous of other people in what they have. We're not called to be resentful because somebody seems to be getting the praise and we don't because it's not supposed to be about us. It's supposed to be about what God has done for us and we act in kind as a result. Why did Jesus bring

a little child, a baby, an infant in the midst of the disciples? Because the wiser we get in the word of God, the more childlike we should become.

A child doesn't worry about where their next meal is coming from. A child does not worry if they're being taken care of. A child does not worry that they're not getting the praise and admiration of their parents because we have a Heavenly father who constantly tells us he loves us and that he promises to give us everything that we need and that he will be with us and that we will have peace. Now if we have all of that, where does our jealousy stem from? Where does our animosity stem from? Where does our gossip stem from?

It stems from a feeling like it's not fair. God is we should be doing something or we should be getting something or we should have something. It's not fair. Well, fair is you deserve death. I deserve death. That's fair. What's not fair is that God gives us grace and mercy, that God loves us, that God forgives us even when we are sinning against him. He loves us and we then turn around and don't forgive each other and judge each other because of jealousy or anger or something. This is evil according to the word of God.

And so we need to be reminded. It's not about who's greatest or who's not. It's not about who gets the accolades or who doesn't. Hopefully, you never think that I deserve the praise for any sermon that I preach because it's not about me. It's about the word of God. It's not about us. It's about the word of God working within us and through us. We don't need to be jealous. We don't need to be anxious. We don't need to be backbiting. We don't need to be gossiping because God promises to give us what we need and promises to give them what they need. And for both of us, it's God that gets the glory.

Last week we talked about how the tongue created so much evil in our lives, and this is just sort of a continuation of that. Why do we speak out against other people? Why do we talk about other people behind their backs? Why do we get jealous and anxious? Why do we accuse other people and hold grudges? Because we're not controlling our tongue, because we don't understand that our tongue is controlled by God or ought to be. We don't understand that we have been forgiven as so have they, and as a result we're to live at peace with one another.

And here, the church, this should be the best place to find peace and harmony and unity amongst each other. And I'm sure each and every one of a church that was ripped apart by somebody having something wrong with somebody else, and it couldn't be resolved and it destroyed a church. We are called to be different. We're called to be like little children, trusting. Trusting that our God will provide all that we need, trusting that he, if there is any vengeance that needs to be met out, that he will do it. Trusting that in the midst of the sorrows and the trials and the

tribulations of this world, that we still have what we need, that God is still providing for us, and that we do not need to be afraid.

I don't know. I can't say that God is not giving you one thing or another because we don't understand the hidden will of God. We do know we live in a fallen world and we are fallen people and therefore bad fallen things happen, sinful things happen. But we do know this. God can redeem all things and all people. Let's not get in the way of that with our own pride and our own jealousy because all of that stems from a lack of understanding who has given us all things. And that is Christ. Our intellect, our mind, our body and soul, our reason and all of our strength, our food, clothing, shoes, house, home, family, animals. Everything that we have is a gift given to us by God to be used for his glory.

And sometimes that means it's being used in a way that's maybe uncomfortable for us, but we still know God is at work and we can still rest as little children rest in their father and mother. Does our father want anything bad for us? Does our father promise to give us all good things? Is our father powerful enough to give us all things? If that's true, don't be anxious. Don't be jealous. Don't fight. Don't quarrel because that's of the world. God has given you all things. Rest in his word. Be at peace in the trials of this world, not because it's easy, but because your heavenly Father has got you in the palm of his hands just like he had that little child. And he will care for you and protect you in this life all the way through to the next. That is the gift given to us. We deserve his vengeance. We receive his peace. We deserve his wrath. We receive his mercy and his love. And may that grace and his mercy and his peace and his love be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.

Amen.