



©2020 Ginger Hertenstein

SERMON TITLE: Jesus' Way of Mission, Walk as Disciples Series

SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:35-44

DATE: January 12, 2020

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read also Jeremiah 15:10-15

Have you ever worked really hard in a job until you got noticed? You did well; you learned the job well; you thought—I can do this, and more! It took a while, but you started thinking about a promotion, or maybe a new job. *What else can I do?*

Finally the day comes. You didn't find the new job but you are promoted. All your friends and your family are impressed. You celebrate. They congratulate you. You start the new position.

Jeremiah was elected to a great job. He was chosen by God to be God's spokesman to point his nation back to God in a pivotal time in Israel's history. Jeremiah embraced it with all his heart. He described it like this: (To God)

"When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD. . . . your hand was on me!" (vs. 15:16-17)

But after a while the job got hard. In fact, he started feeling under appreciated. The work was overwhelming and unsatisfying. No one appreciated what he did. In fact, he received outright criticism and disapproval. Have you ever had a job like that?

Oh, Lord, what have I gotten myself into? He could hardly put one foot in front of the other.

It got so bad that he even complained to his mom about it:

"Woe is me, my Mother. Oh, that I had died at birth! I am hated everywhere I go. . . . All they do is curse me."

Then he prayed, "LORD, you know what's happening to me. Please step in and help me. Punish my persecutors! . . . It's for your sake that I am suffering." (15:10, 15)

I've had that kind of job. (Not THIS job, of course!) Have you found yourself in that place where you get in over your head?

How would Jeremiah find a principle that would keep him steady?

Well, God was not very sympathetic toward Jeremiah. God basically said, "You've strayed in your thoughts. You've lost sight of our mission. You've shifted to concern about yourself. Return to me!"

How easy it is to shift away from your center. That's why God used the word "Return!"

Do you need to return to God this morning? Have you shifted? Are you blaming God like Jeremiah?

God follows his command with promises:

"If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall serve as my mouth. It is they who will turn to you, not you who will turn to them." (v. 19, NRSV)

That is, you will become strong with God's strength. You will have the victory!

But oh, it's so easy to lose your vision and shift.

Think of your own mission—whether it's your work, your relationships in the community, your commitments here at the church, your health, or your schooling. **Whose strength do you want to rely on?** Your own?

God helped Jeremiah understand what it means to follow a mission when those around him had lost theirs. For, that was the culture Jeremiah lived in—a nation that had lost its mission. But he was called to stick with his mission and keep God at the center.

God is essentially taking the burden of Jeremiah's work and easing his load.

Do you remember what Jesus said once?

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt 11:28, 30).

Do you need your load lightened at work—in your relationships, in your commitments, your health, your schooling or your mission?

This principle extends far beyond Jeremiah so let's turn to Jesus' two disciples, two of his inner circle, James and John.

They failed to understand Jeremiah. They had his book; perhaps they forgot to read it. Or, they did not like it. It wasn't on the New York Times bestseller list. So let's hear their story. READ Mark 10:35-44

It's not too hard to discover the problem: it's the same as our 2020 cultural malaise: "It's all about me."

Can you imagine Jesus' thoughts? "Really? We've been together three years and you don't understand yet?"

The best way to get what those two disciples are saying and to get what Jesus is saying and to see the difference is to contrast it:

JAMES AND JOHN	JESUS
We want you to do us a favor	What is your request?
We want to sit in places of honor next to you	You don't know what you are asking!
One on your right and the other on your left	Can you drink my bitter cup of suffering? Can you be baptized with my baptism of suffering?
Self-assessment: "Oh yes, we are able!"	You will indeed drink from my bitter cup and be baptized with my baptism of suffering. But I can't grant who sits on my right and left. God makes that choice!

CONTRAST:

Disciples: "It's all about me!" **Jesus:** "It's all about God."

Why should we, in 2020, as disciples who desire to walk with Jesus, seek God's mission? Why should God rule in our lives?

The disciples sort of knew this and we know the answer in theory, but it is hard to practice. Here's what Jesus said: *It's a matter of motive.* Your motive is revealed in the answer to his question, "What do you want me to do for you?"

You must assess your answer.

Do you seek your own glory? Often we find that our egos need shoring up.

- We don't feel so great about ourselves so success makes us feel better about ourselves. Or,
- approval from others—from parents, or our spouse, or our friends, colleagues, teachers, coworkers, or society—makes us feel better about ourselves.

When you seek your own glory, YOU ARE NOT FREE. You are living for someone who will never be satisfied.

Jesus' question reveals your motive.

Do you seek your own glory or, do you seek God's glory? When you seek God's glory, then Jesus will be satisfied and you will gain true reward.

Jesus continues by explaining how worldly people think: *When you seek your own glory, you will want to lord it over other people. You will want to flaunt your authority over those who serve you.*

Jeremiah went to God with a request. Let's consider his motive. He did not like the bitter cup of suffering he was drinking, and he wanted to lord it over the ones who opposed him.

Ask yourself what's your motive. Is it self-interest?

I would caution you not to turn away from glorifying God. Glorifying God always wins. Jesus said you will be blessed in this life, and gain a magnificent blessing in the end. Aren't we still talking about Jeremiah and the disciples and other people who gave God the glory? What a great honor that Jesus gave them that they continue to help us thousands of years later!

Jesus' way of mission. Yes, to identify with him means our suffering will reflect his. Remember though, His gain is astounding and he shares it with you—it's far beyond what you can gain from your own self-glory.

When faith seems hard, and prospects bad, when you long for something better, God is willingly there for you. Should your motive be to bring God glory and serve other people like Jesus, God will vindicate you and lead you in the right direction. But you must turn to him wholeheartedly. That's Jesus' way of mission.

Which way do you want to follow?

AMEN