

Fifth Sunday in Lent  
Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Series B)  
“God Never Has and Never Will Forget”  
March 28,29, 2009

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Things getting messy in your life? Well, then, make Jesus the center of your life! Having trouble with someone in your family? Finding it harder and harder to pay your bills? Worried about a lot of things? Well, first of all you need to make Jesus Christ the center of your life!

Does that sound like the right thing to do friends, to center all things in your life on Jesus, and make Him the core of everything about you? Putting Jesus right at the center of it all, sounds good, but does it happen that way. Isn't that what we are all about as Christians? That's hardly the case friends. Yes, I said it, we putting Jesus at the center is not what we are about! “What kind of pastor do we have?”

Before we get to upset over what has just been said here let me say this. Jesus does need to be at the center, oh, so very true. But, we don't get to do that. God does that. If it were up to us to put Jesus at the center of our lives who knows where we'd put Him,...and why we put Him where we put Him. Oh, sure, we might put Him at the center of something, but is what we consider the center of our lives really the center of our lives? Guess it all depends on what we consider our lives to be all about. And, would we even get that right?

It probably sounds to you like I'm saying when it comes to us placing Jesus in our lives and keeping Him there we can't do anything right. Well, if this is how it sounds to you, congratulations, you are right about that!

Even when Jesus has been placed in the right place, right in the true center of our lives, (this by the way has nothing to do with anything we do) we still forget He is there and the reason He is there.

Let's consider our Old Testament reading from the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah, the "weeping prophet." Something terrible was going on during Jeremiah's day. The people of Judah had forgotten where God was in their lives. God hadn't forgotten, but the people had. In the first chapter of the Book we find out what the problem was and what was about to happen to the people. "Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the LORD, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me" (1:14).

Yes, because the people had forsaken, or forgotten, the LORD and where He was in their lives, judgment was coming, terrible judgment at that. The powerful kingdoms of the north that didn't like Judah to begin with were coming and they were going to lay siege on the people.

Eventually, the people would be captured, enslaved, and taken to captivity in a foreign land. God directed Jeremiah to give this message to the people before it all happened. All that the LORD had done for these people and they forget all about it as if it wasn't important to them, but it was.

Question is, while the people forgot about the LORD and all the wonderful things He had done for them, did God forget about them? It's easy to think that since they did end up in captivity in a foreign land that, yes, God did forget about them. But, really, friends, that's not true at all.

God did not. They were given ample opportunity to repent of all their unfaithfulness to God, yet, they did not. Jeremiah was indeed very sad about this; however, God still did not forget these people. He still made a Promise to them. Pastor Radtke read it to us. “Behold, the days are coming declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,...I will be their God, and they shall be my people...I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

These people once experienced the LORD being at the center of their lives, but their came a time when He was no longer. Not because God moved, but because they removed Him. To begin with God never had to become the center of their lives, but He wanted to be, and so He made Himself to be. Even after such a gracious act of God as that, they still removed Him and forgot about Him. Still God did not forget. He still made the Promise to once again to forgive them and be their God.

The LORD never gave up. He knew what He wanted and He went after it and got it. As persistent, as jealous, as dedicated and faithful, no wonder God never forgot even though they had.

So, is Jesus, as your Savior, your Redeemer, at the center of your life? I’m not just talking about your time here at Sunday morning and when were with your “Christian” friends and family, but all the time, at the center of your every thought, word, and every thing you do? Even when you are alone? Did you put Him there? No. You did not! He put Himself in that place! Because He wanted to be, better yet, He wants to be there.

Friends, the events that happened in Jeremiah’s time are important for us to consider. We are no different they were. In every area of our lives, at church, at work, at play, at home, we are tempted to think that we are in control, that somehow or another, we, on our own, can steer our own lives in

the right direction and make all the right things happen. This is not at all the case. The only way for the right thing to happen and for us to head in the right direction is for the Lord to place Himself in our lives where He needs to be and direct these things to happen. So, is Jesus at the center of your lives?

Yes! That's what He promises! Right there in your baptism, when that water made contact with your skin, Jesus made Himself the center of your life. At the same time and in the same way He determined what your life would be, a life centered in Him. How you conduct yourself at home, how you raise your children. How you talk to others whether they be friends, family, coworkers, or fellow church members. How you conduct yourself in the work place, and on and on and on. It's all determined by what is at the core of your life. And, for us who have been baptized, those of us who have been redeemed in the Blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus is the center of our lives! That's His promise.

Considering once again, this covenant God was declaring to make with the people of Israel and Judah,...it was a promise, a one-way contract with the people. God determined what that promise would be. Definitely, it was a one-sided deal, an unconditional promise. God did not say, "If you will such and such, I will make a new covenant with you," but God said, "I will..."

Friends, it is stressful when it comes to making Jesus the center of your life. And, the reason it's stressful is because it's impossible for you to do this. First of all do you even know what you need at the center of your life to begin with? Even if you were to know that, then, where's the center of your life? But, we are born into this world dead in our trespasses and sins. We cannot determine what the Lord needs to be for us and where He

needs to be for us. God, Himself, determines that and He did, and He does it, the way He wants to do it.

Okay, so we are sure He wants to be and becomes the center of our lives. We get this. But, do we always remember, and not forget, how He does this and what He did to make that possible?

Friends, the Old Testament, particularly what we heard this morning can sound so gloomy and sad, can't it? Yes, it is sad the people repeatedly rebelled and forgot their LORD, but what is easy for us sinners to overlook is what and who was right there- the LORD and His mercy, grace, and forgiveness,...His faithfulness and dedication to His promise. He never did quit and give up, did He? He kept on with His covenant promise all the way to the point of making His own Son, Jesus Christ, as the sacrifice for the sins of these rebellious, unfaithful, and forgetful people.

And, He is no different when it comes to any of us. Even though we forget who He is and where He places Himself in our lives, He never forgets us and where He wants to be in our lives. Right at the center of everything we think, say, and do.

Yes, at the center of our lives, but even more important to us is the center of who He is for us. He is the One who suffered and died the most horrible way so we can live- eternally, and not die forever. The Cross of Jesus Christ, the forgiveness won there, the eternal He guarantees us in His Resurrection- that promise, that one-sided covenant, is right at the center because He made it be the center! It's our foundation for all our thinking, our speaking, and all our doings in life. It's the foundation for our conduct in the home, at work, with friends, and the very reason we're here this morning. None of it could be possible if God were not the faithful God He

is. It would have never happened if He had forgotten us? Oh, yes, we forget, but He keeps on remembering. That's a relief.

Right before this sermon we sang "From God Can Nothing Move Me." What wonderful words to sing and meditate. If you would please open up to that hymn, hymn 713. Let's read a few of the verses together.

Verse 1. From God can nothing move me; He will not step aside. But gently will reprove me. And be my constant guide. He stretches out His hand. In evening and in morning, My life with grace adorning wherever I may stand.

Verse 4. Each day at His good pleasure God's gracious will is done. He sent His greatest treasure In Jesus Christ, His Son. He every gift imparts. The bread of earth and heaven Are by His kindness given. Praise Him with thankful hearts!

Verse 5. Praise God with acclamation And in His gifts rejoice. Each day finds its vocation Responding to His voice. Soon years on earth are past; But time we spend expressing The love of God brings blessing. That will forever last!

Just these 3 verses of the 7 of this hymn remind us.... where and with who does it all start and end? With God and His love through Jesus His Son, and all for the reason that He sent His only Son. Who was promised all along, came, and suffered, and died. So He could be the center of our lives.

And, our vocation in life,...all that we are to others,...with Jesus Christ, the crucified, having made Himself the center of our lives,...we live out our lives in response to what that has given us. Not only a life, but an eternal life centered in Him.

So, life messy at times? Having trouble with someone in your family, or at work, or here at church? Having trouble finding money for your lives? Friends, take joy, Jesus is at the center of your life because He placed Himself there. Let us consider what we've been given. We're going to live forever in paradise! What are all the struggles in life when it comes to this? What struggles? Oh, we forget the struggles, because God has remembered us! Amen.