

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 17)

WHEN GOD'S WORD WEIGHS YOU DOWN THE WORD OF
GOD PICKS YOU UP

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 17)
Analysis by Mark Marius

*15 O LORD, you know;
remember me and visit me,
and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors.
In your forbearance do not take me away;
know that on your account I suffer insult.
16 Your words were found, and I ate them,
and your words became to me a joy
and the delight of my heart;
21 I am called by your name,
O LORD, God of hosts.
17 I did not sit in the company of merry-makers,
nor did I rejoice;
under the weight of your hand I sat alone,
for you had filled me with indignation.
18 Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?
Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,
like waters that fail.
19 Therefore thus says the LORD:
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.*

*20 And I will make you to this people
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you,
but they shall not prevail over you,
for I am with you
to save you and deliver you,
says the LORD.*

*21 I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,
and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.*

DIAGNOSIS: Turning Our Back on God's Word

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *We Are Deceived by God's Word*

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet, to speak for the Lord. And in doing so, Jeremiah was doing the things of the Divine. However, it's a mighty cross to bear when we feel we HAVE to (on God's account) do this. And the cross only gets heavier when those whom you are speaking to have no interest in the divine words you are delivering. So, they ignore you, insult you, and even persecute you for it. Our "earthly" world can seem like a lonely place, which causes us great concern.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *We Are Burdened by God's Word*

But God's Word can provide comfort and bring joy. Jeremiah ate them up. But that didn't make things easier for Jeremiah. That Word became a burden in Jeremiah's world. If we don't trust that joyful Word and take it to heart then maybe we are focusing on

earthly things, like how the Word is received by others. Even a diet of God's word and water can pass through you if you are hoping that by your righteous actions you will be vindicated.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *We Are Killed by God's Word*

So, we see, that doing everything right, drinking from the water that God provides, and eating God's Word are all godly actions, but they don't necessarily lead us to trusting God. And if you don't trust God, then something else is your god. And that god replaces the God who truly knows you (v.15). So if you don't have God, no matter what good you are doing, and how well you obey, you end up feeling like Jeremiah, lost and all alone. We feel the weight of God's hand crushing us, like our pain is never going to end, and our wounds are left open to kill us.

PROGNOSIS: The Word of God Turns Us Back to God

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Word of God Cures Us*

It is God who turns to us and comes to be Emmanuel. Look at those divine words in the Gospel from Matthew where Jesus talks about his suffering, and being killed, and raised up. The One who lives those words probably could have ended up feeling a bit like Jeremiah did in this lament. But the difference is, this One-Jesus, trusted God's Word completely, because, in fact, He was the Word of God (thanks to John 1:1), and therefore, fulfilled God's word. Unlike Jeremiah, Jesus wasn't concerned as much about how the world treated him as he was concerned about his treatment for the world—crucifixion and resurrection, the surest thing to take the pain away and heal all our open wounds.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *The Word of God Carries Us*

The Word of God comes to restore life, and in our baptism he is truly unfailing. The Word of God gives himself to us to eat to

our joy and delight through Holy Communion. And the Word of God no longer weighs on us but now holds us up and carries us to a fortress of protection through the Holy Spirit.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *The Word of God Is Trustworthy*

Trusting in the Word of God we utter the precious words of the gospel to anyone with ears. We deliver words of good news that not only help balance the law but even better, fulfill and complete the law. We no longer feel alone, or that God's Word is against us, but trust that the Word of God is with us since he has saved and delivered us. And with that trust we can continue to be the divine voice in our world. And as we faithfully deliver the Word, God is redeeming and delivering us from the world.