

5 Thus says the LORD: What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves? 6 They did not say, "Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that no one passes through, where no one lives?" 7 I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. 8 The priests did not say, "Where is the LORD?" Those who handle the law did not know me; the rulers transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit. 9 Therefore once more I accuse you, says the LORD,

Jeremiah shows God's methodology clearly. God's style is to love and care for the people. God reaches out to the people in an agreement that is open, honest, and fair. The only obligation of the people in the relationship is to be a community that is faithful to the Lord. God is righteous and keeps the promise and God warns the people when they break the promise. God reminds them of the promise and provides provisional care. The last thing is that God, in all fairness, allows the consequences to happen.

The background for our Scripture reading today starts at Exodus by demonstrating God's provisional care. God has been faithful to the people. God brought them out of Egypt. God gave to them the promised land. God delivered them from oppression and suffering. God led them through danger to achieve a new life. Exodus clearly shows that God watched over, cared for, and protected the people. So, the Scripture starts off by questioning if it is God that caused the people to fall away.

The problem is the same problem as it always has been over and over again. It is the will of humans vs. the will of God and human failure to follow the word of God. In today's Scripture the whole of society has fallen away from God: rulers, kings, religious leaders, and mainstream society. Everybody was doing their own thing instead of God's thing.

So, what does God do? God loves and cares for the people. This is shown very clearly in Jeremiah. First of all, God warns the people. The Scripture is very clear that this warning comes from God. They did not say "Where is the LORD?" Other words they did not seek the Lord. They became distant, apathetic, and lapsed. They did not put the Lord first. Instead of seeking the Lord, they catered to what was popular in mainstream society. They chose to do their own thing over devotion to God. So, the warning comes from God. Stop worshipping other gods. In other words, do not put something else first in your life. The people stand accused by God for a breach of covenant. Turning from God is wrong. Failing to worship God is wrong. Putting something else in front of God is wrong.

So what does God do? In order to warn the people God needs a spokesperson. God selected Jeremiah to be the divinely guided spokesperson to warn the people to repent and change. Jeremiah objected and said he was too young. God knows an excuse when God hears one. I will take a break and explain something. Preachers hear so many excuses. I find it ironic that people say they want to spend eternity with God but will not even devote one hour a week for worship. Imagine how God feels if you want to be with God when you die but neglect God when you are alive. You have to live by the word of God. So, Jeremiah presents an excuse to

God. But God said no "I have put my words in your mouth." God paid no attention to the excuse. To God any excuse isn't good enough.

Jeremiah did not have an easy job. Prophets are unpopular because they go against popular teaching; they go against rulers, kings, and religious leaders. They are unpopular because they preach the word of God. Jeremiah warns the people what you are doing is wrong. You have turned from God and you need to repent or face doom. Jeremiah's message goes against what is popular; it goes against the king and the religious leaders. Jeremiah does not sacrifice God for favor with the king. Jeremiah sacrifices favor with king for favor with God. So, Jeremiah is banned by king Jehoiakim from speaking in the temple. In response to this Jeremiah gets a secretary to write a scroll but it is burned. Jeremiah is falsely accused of treason, imprisoned, thrown into a cistern and left to starve to death. In spite of it all Jeremiah always remained faithful because he knew that he was doing what had to be done - follow the will of God over the doctrine of humanity.

The challenge for the church today is to see the parallelism between our world today and the world in the time of Jeremiah. The problem sure sounds like America today. People do not seek the Lord. People become distant, apathetic, and lapsed. People tend to cater to what is popular in mainstream society. They choose to do their own thing over a life of devotion. People today put other things first and fail to repent. Through Jeremiah the Lord speaks to the church today because the same problem exists and it always has - the transgression of humanity. The challenge for us is to see it and take action. Take an inventory of your life. Resolve any discrepancy and live by the word of God.

The Lord speaks to the church today just like back then. God used prophets to deliver the word of God to the people. Today we have that written word. We have the word of God. Read the Bible. Study the Bible. Make it your guide for daily living.