

Lent Devotional March 18, 2025

Scripture

Jeremiah 2:1-13, 29-32

1 The word of the Lord came to me, saying: 2 Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord:

*I remember the devotion of your youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.*

*3 Israel was holy to the Lord,
the first fruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it were held guilty;
disaster came upon them,
says the Lord.*

4 Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. 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,
and I accuse your children's children.*

*10 Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar and examine with care;
see if there has ever been such a thing.*

*11 Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?
But my people have changed their glory
for something that does not profit.*

12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this,

*be shocked, be utterly desolate,
says the Lord,
13 for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water.*

...

*29 Why do you complain against me?
You have all rebelled against me,
says the Lord.*

*30 In vain I have struck down your children;
they accepted no correction.
Your own sword devoured your prophets
like a ravening lion.*

*31 And you, O generation, behold the word of the Lord!
Have I been a wilderness to Israel,
or a land of thick darkness?
Why then do my people say, "We are free,
we will come to you no more"?*

*32 Can a girl forget her ornaments,
or a bride her attire?
Yet my people have forgotten me,
days without number.*

Devotion

The Rev. Ben Beres '10

We grew up hearing, "You are what you eat." In the case of my household, my siblings and I really ought to be hot dogs and mac and cheese by now! It's not that my mom couldn't cook, but at the end of the work day, dealing with everyone else's children leaves one a little sapped for serving one's own brood with the most complex and nutritionally diverse menus. Honestly, I still like hot dogs and macaroni and cheese, so I'm not sure it's the end of the world.

Now according to Jeremiah, the Lord did better by his children, Israel. He gave them a land that overflowed in abundance, bringing them from a land of deserts and ravines to one with rich and fertile produce. They had an abundance given to them. They had every good thing to eat. They wandered away from the Lord anyway.

They weren't mistreated. They weren't overtaxed. They weren't in need of, well, anything. But as the prophet describes it, they defiled the land, started pretending they could meet their own needs, and forgot about the Lord. They stopped asking each other "Where is the Lord?" Even the priests stopped asking it. God hadn't made himself less available; they just stopped looking for him.

If they looked for him, they might feel compelled to follow. They might remember how good they had it, walking in his footsteps. The people might not go chasing after the idols their neighbors fashioned or be contented to watch the water trickle out of the broken cisterns they'd dug. And more than the truth of

their history, their reality, and their hope, they wanted to do what they wanted to do. They valued freedom to roam over faithfulness.

They had the best stuff to eat, but it didn't make them good. Maybe, you aren't what you eat, but are a reflection of what you follow? This Lent, do you need to turn aside from the way you've been going? Have you been following all sorts of things, but forgetting to ask, "Where is the Lord?" You aren't what you eat, but your faithfulness reflects your following.

Prayer

Holy One, there is none like you, and all we have ever needed is found in you. Forgive us for wandering away, for defiling good gifts, and for pretending that we can do what you alone are capable of. Help us to follow you better, beginning with our very next step. In your Name, Amen.