

Sermon Study Guide

Pastor: Dr. Henry Schorr

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Sermon: Greatness According to Jesus (Part 3) – Rest in God's Sovereignty - No Matter What

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What did you want to be when you grew up?
2. What dreams, hopes and desires did you have?
3. Share a time when you have not 'seen' the fruit of your work?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Get to know Jeremiah! (Jeremiah 1:1-19). His ministry of 53 years occurred during the tumultuous final days of Judah and the City/Temple of Jerusalem:
 - what was his background/heritage?
 - describe his relationship with God; when did it begin?
 - what was the word of the Lord that Jeremiah was to proclaim? (vv.9-10, 17-18)
 - note the repetition of words in 1:8 and 1:19; how would Jeremiah have responded to God's call?
 - what were God's expectations of him? (16:1)
2. After prophesying faithfully through Chapters 2 – 10, Jeremiah discovers a plot for his death (11:18). Describe his feelings. (12:1-4)
3. Another dark time is 20:1-2. What was Jeremiah's response? (20:7-9, 11-13, 14-18) What was going in his spirit?
4. Review the situations of Jer 37:14-17 and Jer 38:6.
How did his deepening relationship with God motivate him to write Lamentations 3:22-23?
5. Compare and contrast the two Old Testament characters Joseph (Genesis 37 – 50) and Jeremiah.
What do their lives teach us about God's plans for people?
How do their lives model Matthew 6:24?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

About Jer 29:11, Pastor Henry said,

"God reveals that He has our best interest at heart in all things. The word 'prosper' means to THRIVE, which means even though God wants to meet my needs, what He wants more than anything is for my relationship with Him to THRIVE and that He will use whatever comes along to draw me closer to Him and to shape my character, because my ultimate destiny is who I am becoming in Him."

1. In what 'dark place' are you struggling to trust God's heart for you?
How can our group pray for you?
2. This week, how will you encourage others you know who are experiencing 'darkness' in their lives? Which helpful Scriptures can you share with them?

Resources

Simon Sinek on 'Millenials' – YouTube

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

Jesus defined true greatness in three ways (Mark 10:35-45); it comes to those who – **1. Serve God and others:**

<http://www.cschurch.ca/sermons/general-sermons-2017/greatness-according-to-jesus/>

2. Trust God's goodness: <http://www.cschurch.ca/sermons/general-sermons-2017/greatness-according-to-jesus-part-2/>

3. Rest in God's sovereignty – no matter what:

<http://www.cschurch.ca/sermons/general-sermons-2017/greatness-according-to-jesus-part-3/>

Jeremiah 1:1-19

The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. ²The word of the LORD came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, ³and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile. ⁴The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." ⁶"Alas, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young." ⁷But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. ⁹Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." ¹¹"Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. ¹²Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. ¹³They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Lamentations 3:22-23

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Sermon Study Summary

Mother's Day and Father's Day aren't always easy for some people. Women may feel they failed as mothers. Others may not have been able to become mothers or have/had painful relationships with their mothers. Pain, hurt and disappointment may be heightened on special days if life hasn't turned out as some people hoped; they are unhappy, discouraged or depressed. Millennials were told "You are special and can succeed at anything" but years later that was not the case; they were discontented, unsettled and unhappy. (Simon Sinek) They had not accomplished anything significant and lived with 'low grade sadness'.

What if your life, family, career or impact as a Christ-follower isn't turning out as you dreamed it would? The prophet Jeremiah could relate. God clearly called him as a messenger for His people to turn from idolatry and return to God or risk destruction by aggressor nations. (1:4) Also God told Jeremiah not to marry or have a family (16:1) and that he would face rejection. (1:18-19) Jeremiah initially had excuses (1:7) but God saw his humble heart. He said 'Yes' thinking that God would use him to save Judah and turn people back to Himself. What a call of significance! A path to greatness! Jeremiah passionately and boldly declared God's truth (chs 2-10) but his message was unpopular. People conspired to put him to death, beat him and threw him into a dungeon, then into a deep cistern trying to shut him up. (chs 11,20,37,38)

No doubt Jeremiah was upset by this cruelty but more so by the fact that no one listened to him, not one life was changed. (20:7-8) Ultimately Babylon invaded Judah, destroying Jerusalem and the temple. (ch 39) How heartbreaking and frustrating that must have been for Jeremiah after 40 years of sacrifice and warnings! As far as we can tell from Scripture he saw no fruit from his efforts. Unlike Joseph who was elevated from prison to palace and used by God, Jeremiah never saw greatness nor felt the joy of having a significant impact in his ministry.

How many can identify with Jeremiah's dark night of the soul--in your marriage, family, career, business or ministry? We want our life to count and have heard God's call to make a difference but if it isn't happening, how do we deal with that disappointment and despair? Jesus said "No man can serve two masters..." (Mt 6:24) so we have to decide who we are going to trust. Will I trust God and God alone as my source of truth, wisdom and direction? OR will I trust myself, that is be my own god? Our decision determines how we define success and significance but also how we deal with disappointments. Jesus describes a great, significant life in our culture and in the Kingdom of God. (Mk 10:35-45) In a culture that rejects God, success is based on how others rate you, so to be great you compete and outrank others. Those who trust God find their identity and value in Him; they embrace HIS definition of greatness and success.

If Jeremiah had trusted himself rather than the Lord, he would have had cause to be totally depressed and quit. Though he struggled, vented his doubts, poured out his questions and disappointments to God, he remained faithful to the Lord. (20:7-13) Though he didn't understand why God called him to such a hard task which had no impact, the only thing that did make sense was to trust in his God. Jeremiah made the decision to REST IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. Near the end of his life in a foreign land he remembered God's love and faithfulness. (Lam 3:22)

God shows His heart for His people: He has plans to prosper us, (Jer 29:11) prosper or 'thrive' in our relationship with Him as we make Him the object of our highest affection. He uses any means to draw us closer to Him and shape our character. Some like Joseph saw a break-through and experienced a new thing. Some like Jeremiah saw no change in circumstances and wondered if God cared. God's plans are sovereign but do not guarantee a problem-free life. True for Jeremiah. True also for Jesus: born in a cattle trough to a poor family, homeless, dying on a cross. True also for Christian mothers in the developing world who are joyful yet are very concerned about how to feed their family. Life is hard and may not make sense in this broken world. Pastor Henry with a recurrence of cancer faced God's question, "Am I enough?"

This is our battle: Will we trust God no matter what? Who or what is the basis of our significance and identity? Christians in our culture face this daily. Do I live a meaningless, self-absorbed, materialistic, pleasure-seeking life? OR do I rest in God's sovereignty because He sees and He cares, He is with me working for my ultimate good and His ultimate glory. Stand firm even if nothing changes. (1 Cor 15:58) Jeremiah's life shows that GOD IS FAR MORE INTERESTED IN DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM THAN ELEVATING OUR HAPPINESS. HE IS FAR MORE INTERESTED IN DEEPENING OUR CHARACTER THAN ELEVATING OUR COMFORT.