

* These notes are provided for personal devotional and study purposes only. They may not be published, distributed, or disseminated to others without the permission of the author.

Genuine Reformation
Series: The Weeping Prophet
March 6, 2022
Rev. Andrew Hawkins, Ph.D.
The Village Church
Evening Service

I. **Context – Two Evils**

- A. Last week – Chapter 2 and the Divorce Indictment
 - 1. **Jeremiah 2:13** (ESV) — 13 for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.
- B. Two Evils
 - 1. Forsaken God
 - a. Fountain of living waters
 - 2. Built for themselves broken cisterns
- C. **Forsaking God**
 - 1. Perfect husband
 - 2. Providing husband
 - 3. Protecting husband
- D. **Built broken cisterns**
 - 1. Spiritual adultery
 - a. Lovers as substitutes for God
 - b. Changed their gods (unheard of)
 - c. Propositioned neighbors for political protection
 - d. Broke easy yoke of Yahweh
 - e. Became a harlot, waiting for action
 - (1) Baal worship
 - (2) Good at it – could even teach real prostitutes
 - f. Wild vine (rather than fruitful vine)
 - (1) Spiritual kudzu
 - g. Indelible stain
 - h. Wild animal out of control
 - (1) Ungainly infant camel
 - (2) Donkey in heat
- E. Compelling argument; no defense
 - 1. Foolish people
 - a. Ryken: When God’s people cheat on him, it is like leaving a fresh mountain spring to drink from a sewer.
- F. Not a message without hope

1. **Jeremiah 3:14** (ESV) — 14 Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.
2. Almost as if God violates His own law
 - a. Deuteronomy 24 – prevented a man from remarrying his divorced ex-wife
 - (1) Reason – prevents men from using and abusing women; ancient form of wife-swapping
 - (2) Great protections for women in the ancient world
 - b. But God, who finds in His bride every cause for divorce (adultery), nevertheless wants her back!

II. **False Reformation**

- A. Chapter 3 – what has to happen to get her back
 1. What is necessary for a genuine reformation?
 2. Judah had already been through a false reformation
 - a. Josiah – began to clean up Judah
 - (1) Found the Book of the Law while temple restorations were undertaken
 - (2) Struck by the contents; overwhelmed by sin; genuinely mourned
 - (3) Did what he could to institute reforms
 - (4) Reinstated genuine worship; removed idolatrous worship
 - b. Reformation didn't take
 - (1) Josiah was reformed; not the people
 - c. Once Josiah was killed, Judah quickly went back to their spiritual adultery
 3. If they had only responded to Jeremiah's message, spoken during the days of Josiah
 - a. Could have avoided disaster
 - b. Could have experienced genuine revival and reformation
 4. Principles of reformation are the same for all ages

III. **Principles of Genuine Reformation**

- A. **Realize the sinfulness of sin**
 1. **Jeremiah 3:22b–25 (ESV) —**
 - a. 22 ... “Behold, we come to you, for you are the LORD our God.
 - b. 23 Truly the hills are a delusion, the orgies on the mountains. Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.
 - c. 24 “But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our fathers labored, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.
 - d. 25 Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us. For we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”
 2. Idols to whom they prostituted themselves are deceptive

- a. Not what they seem
- b. Appear to be beautiful; actually ugly
 - (1) CS Lewis – Pilgrim’s Regress
 - (2) Traveler sees all the enticements on the first part of the journey
 - (3) Then sees their reality on the way back; grotesque, horrific forms of degradation and deformity
- c. Need to see sin for what it is
- d. **Sin is always destructive**
 - (1) Made all labor vain, worthless; consumed
 - (2) Not just labor – agricultural products
 - (3) Not just products – sons and daughters
 - (4) **Jeremiah 3:2** (ESV) — 2 Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see! Where have you not been ravished? By the waysides you have sat awaiting lovers like an Arab in the wilderness. You have polluted the land with your vile whoredom.
- e. **Sin is historic** – practiced for generation
 - (1) Accumulated a host of prostitutes
 - (2) Ryken: They have become equal-opportunity worshipers. They do not have just one or two idols – they have a whole closet full of them.
- f. **Sin is shameful**
 - (1) **Jeremiah 3:3** (ESV) — 3 ... you have the forehead of a whore; you refuse to be ashamed.
 - (2) Cf how sin is practiced today with no shame; even flaunted
- g. **Sin is always against God**
 - (1) Easier for us to see sin when we hurt other people
 - (2) Harder for us to realize that every sin, even secret sins, are an offense to the holiness of God
 - (3) Sproul’s story
 - (a) Don’t engage in sexual sin – might get the girl pregnant
 - i) Then came birth control
 - (b) Don’t engage in sexual sin – might get a disease
 - i) Then came protection and treatments
 - (c) Don’t engage in sexual sin – might get a reputation
 - i) Then it became good to have a reputation
 - (d) The only real message that ought to be communicated is that such sin is an offense to the holiness of God himself
 - (4) **Psalms 51:4** (ESV) — 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

B. **Hear God’s Call**

1. **Jeremiah 3:12** (ESV) — 12 Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, “ ‘Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever.
2. **Jeremiah 3:14** (ESV) — 14 Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.
3. Play on words – 18 times turn or return is used in Ch 3
 - a. Ryken: What the prophet is really saying is “Return, turnable children,” or perhaps “Come back, backsliders.” God is calling the kids back home.
4. God’s call is gracious
 - a. Making this call to a recalcitrant people
 - (1) Shown no movement toward God
 - b. Ryken: Why does God do it? He does it for no reason at all except that he is a God of love. This is the inscrutable grace of God. He is gracious to the ungracious, faithful to the unfaithful, loving to the unloving. His call comes first. God issues the invitation to come back home before anything else happens, before we have made the slightest motion back toward him. This is the priority of the divine call in salvation.

C. **Experience God’s Choice**

1. No reformation, no salvation, without God’s choice
 - a. Risk – treading on dangerous territory
 - (1) You can work it out with the Lord
 - b. **1 John 4:19** (ESV) — 19 We love because he first loved us.
 - c. **Romans 9:11** (ESV) — 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—
 - d. **Romans 9:16** (ESV) — 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.
2. **Jeremiah 3:14** (ESV) — 14 Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.
 - a. Master – husband
 - b. Take (NIV = choose)
 - c. One here, two there
3. Apart from election, there is no desire by sinners to come to Christ
 - a. Flesh profits nothing (John 6.63)
 - b. Enemies of God
 - c. Spiritually dead
4. God’s effectual call gives us the desire for Christ
5. Ryken: But the truth is that if God did not come and put you on his shoulders, you would never come home. You do not know the way home

without his call, and you do not want to come home without his electing grace. You need God's sovereign grace to completely transform you and bring you back home. One by one and two by two, God brings each and every one of his children home.

6. Were you smart enough, good enough, wise enough, righteous enough to choose God on your own without God?
 - a. Did your flesh profit something?
7. Must experience God's choice – stop fighting it; recognize your human inability

D. **Genuine repentance**

1. **Whole-hearted and thorough**
 - a. **Jeremiah 3:10** (ESV) — 10 Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the LORD.”
 - (1) Problem with Judah's “repentance” under Josiah
 - b. **Jeremiah 4:3** (ESV) — 3 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.”
 - (1) Ryken: God's warning includes some advice about spiritual agriculture.... Most Christians are content with the size of their present obedience to God. That obedience is about the size of a hanging basket, or maybe a window box, or perhaps even a small garden plot in the city. But God wants his people to break new ground in their obedience. In other words, God wants you to do more than just tend the little garden you keep planting year after year. He wants you to do some real farming. It is time to put away your hoe and your shovel. Get the John Deere out of the barn, hitch up the plow, go out into the fields, and break up the rocky soil of your heart.
 - (2) Ryken: He wants more than just prayers of repentance – he wants deeds of repentance. He wants more than just circumcised Israelites – he wants circumcised hearts. And he wants more than just baptized Christians – he wants baptized lives.
2. **God-directed**
 - a. **Jeremiah 3:13** (ESV) — 13 Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the LORD your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the LORD.
 - (1) Transgression is against God alone
 - (2) Can't defend yourself that these are victimless crimes
 - (3) Repentance must be God-directed
3. **Grace-responsive** (Ryken)

- a. **Jeremiah 3:12** (ESV) — 12 Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, “ ‘Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever.
- 4. **Obedience-producing**
 - a. **Jeremiah 3:4–5** (ESV) — 4 Have you not just now called to me, ‘My father, you are the friend of my youth— 5 will he be angry forever, will he be indignant to the end?’ Behold, you have spoken, but you have done all the evil that you could.”
 - b. Cambridge Declaration (Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals): Evangelical churches today are increasingly dominated by the spirit of this age rather than by the Spirit of Christ. As evangelicals, we call ourselves to repent of this sin and to recover the historic Christian faith.
 - c. Cambridge Declaration (Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals): We repent of our worldliness. We have been influenced by the “gospels” of our secular culture, which are no gospels. We have weakened the church by our own lack of serious repentance, our blindness to the sins in ourselves which we see so clearly in others, and our inexcusable failure adequately to tell others about God’s saving work in Jesus Christ.
- 5. Genuine repentance is the essence of reformation
 - a. Ryken: Repentance is not something we do so that God will let us come back home, it is what going back home is all about.
- E. **Responsive to Faithful Preaching**
 - 1. **Jeremiah 3:15** (ESV) — 15 “ ‘And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.”
 - 2. No true reformation without submission to the faithful preaching of the Word
 - 3. John Shaw (Puritan): In a word, ministers according to God’s heart preach Jesus Christ. Christ is the end, He is the scope, He is the design of their ministry. That design is to bring sinners to Christ, to build up believers in Christ. They preach Christ in His person, Christ in His natures, Christ in His offices, Christ with the free offers and tenders of His grace, Christ in His righteousness, Christ with His unsearchable riches...
 - 4. Ryken: The main thing John Knox did to bring reformation to Scotland was to preach the Word of God. Knox did not become a Reformer until he put down his sword and picked up his Bible, the sword of the Lord. If we desire reformation in our own churches, we must pray for our ministers because reformation comes through proclamation.
- F. **God-centered Worship**
 - 1. Ryken: Once you have answered God’s call to salvation and repented for all your sins, what you want to do more than anything else in the world is to worship God. That is where reformation always leads. A reformed church is a worshiping church.

2. Our age – man centered worship; all about us
3. **Jeremiah 3:16–17** (ESV) — 16 And when you have multiplied and been fruitful in the land, in those days, declares the LORD, they shall no more say, “The ark of the covenant of the LORD.” It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. 17 At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.
 - a. No need for ark of covenant
 - (1) Presence of God by HS
 - b. Gathering of nations
 - (1) Foreshadowing inclusion of Gentiles as people of God in worshiping community
 - c. **Ephesians 2:14–22** (ESV) — 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

IV. **How Important is Genuine Reformation?**

- A. **Jeremiah 4:2** (ESV) — 2 “... and if you swear, ‘As the LORD lives,’ in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.”
 1. Evangelism of the nations is at stake
- B. Ryken: Christians usually blame social and national problems on the sinful ideas of secular people. But this passage teaches that if the people of God would truly confess their own sins, the nations of the world would be blessed. If born-again Christians in the evangelical church would return to God with all their hearts and get their idols out of God’s sight, then the world would give glory to God.