

TEXT: Jeremiah 22:13-17

TITLE: WHAT TYPE OF LEADERSHIP IMPRESSES THE LORD?

BIG IDEA:

GOD VALUES CORPORATE JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OVER PERSONAL PALATIAL SPLENDOR

INTRODUCTION:

Jeremiah had the unpleasant task of bringing God's word of condemnation and judgment to the highest rulers in the land. This was not the way to earn man's praise or gain rewards and accolades for one's faithful ministry. But God was concerned that the king bring blessing to His people rather than burden them down with exploitation and oppressive service.

Wiersbe: During a time of international crisis, Jehoiakim was more concerned about building his own spacious palace than he was about building a righteous kingdom, and he even used unpaid Jewish slave labor to do it!

Ellison: The prophecy against Jehoiakim is the most scathing of all Jeremiah's messages against kings. Verses 13-14 address him in the third person; in vv. 15-17 he is addressed in the second person; in v. 18 he is addressed by name. Though a son of the godly Josiah, Jehoiakim was the opposite of his father in temperament, action, and attitude toward God.

I. (:13-15a) GOD CONDEMNS SELF INDULGENT LEADERS WHO TRY TO LOOK IMPRESSIVE AT THE EXPENSE OF JUSTICE AND COMPASSION

A. Three Common Leadership Failures

1. Self Advancement at the Expense of Righteousness and Justice

"Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness and his upper rooms without justice,"

2. Burdensome Exploitation and Oppression

"Who uses his neighbor's services without pay and does not give him his wages,"

3. Substituting Personal Agendas for God's Kingdom Purposes

"Who says, 'I will build myself a roomy house With spacious upper rooms, And cut out its windows, Paneling it with cedar and painting it bright red.'"

B. Fundamental Error in Perspective – Confusing Impressive External Glitz for the Heart Righteousness that God Values and Wants to See Implemented

"Do you become a king because you are competing in cedar?"

["But a beautiful palace does not make a great king." -- Living Bible]

II. (:15b-16) GOD COMMENDS LEADERS WHO LIVE IN MODERATION WHILE RULING WITH JUSTICE AND COMPASSION

- A. Practicing Justice and Righteousness Compels God to Provide for Your Needs
“Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him.”
- B. Putting the Priority on Justice and Compassion Ensures the Corporate Well-Being
“He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; Then it was well.”
- C. Practicing Justice and Righteousness is Consistent with Knowing God
“Is not that what it means to know Me? Declares the LORD.”

III. (:17) GOD CALLS OUT LEADERS WHO PERVERT JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS TO FEATHER THEIR OWN NESTS – IN 3 SPECIFIC AREAS:

- A. Bankrupting the People – Seeking Dishonest Personal Gain at the Expense of Others
“But your eyes and your heart are intent only upon your own dishonest gain,”
- B. Bleeding the People – Intimidating and Harming People by a Domineering Rule
“And on shedding innocent blood”
- C. Burdening the People – Using Political Power to Take Advantage of the Weak
“And on practicing oppression and extortion.”

CONCLUSION:

Stedman: *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. [Lest we wonder who this would be, he tells us how to identify him.] And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”*
{Jer 23:5-6 RSV}

Micah 6:8 *“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we truly putting the priority on seeking first the kingdom of God and His

righteousness?

- 2) In what ways do spiritual leaders today exploit people and burden them down?
- 3) Are we more concerned with external pomp and circumstance than with internal righteousness and social justice?
- 4) Are we actively showing compassion by taking up the cause of the afflicted and the needy?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Jeremiah was sent to tell this king that this was what was wrong in his life. He had failed to correct the wrongs of the land, had failed to "*deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who had been robbed*", and had failed himself to be a pattern of justice and righteousness.

Then the second thing that government leaders are to do: "*Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow.*" These are the minority groups in any country, the weak, the helpless. You will notice that the king is told here that it is his task to watch that he does no violence to them. Here is a recognition of the power of government to hurt the weak, a recognition that government finds it easy to do so in its management of events. Bureaucracy can grow up, making it easy to turn a deaf ear and to be unavailable to those who are really in trouble. And special care must be taken by any government to watch over the weak among them -- the aliens, the foreigners, those with different cultural patterns; and the widows; and the fatherless, the orphans -- those with no one to plead their cause. This is the task of government.

And the third responsibility of government leaders -- to keep the courts honest and just: "*Do not shed innocent blood in this place.*" The task of government is to see that justice is available in a courtroom, that the guilty are found out and the innocent are freed, that innocent people are not punished wrongly by the court. This king had failed in this, and the prophet goes on to detail it for him in Verses 13 and following.

Piper: I Will Raise Up for David a Righteous Branch

Jeremiah 21:11-22:30 is a collection of oracles which Jeremiah spoke from the Lord against these kings. I want us to look at this whole unit, because it all leads up to the prophecy of the coming king in Jeremiah 23:1-8.

Clarence Weaver Sr: God Demands a Just Society

The word "woe" is used as preparation for a declaration of judgment and condemnation. The charges against Jehoiakim are injustice, pride, arrogance, greed, and oppression of the poor and laborers and the lack of right priorities as king.

- Injustice: unfairness, prejudice, wrong, and discrimination.
- Pride: conceited, self-importance, proud, and vain
- Arrogance: haughtiness, egotism, and overconfidence
- Greed: gluttony, ravenousness, desire, and insatiability
- Oppression: domination, subjugation, and cruelty

People that have those kinds of spirits don't care who is hurt or how it is paid for. There is nothing wrong with anyone having things to reflect their position, however the motivation behind obtaining them will always be the judge.

King Jehoiakim's was condemned for his wicked reign of injustice, covetousness, violence, oppression, and bloodshed.

- Injustice: (James 3:16 AMP) For where there is jealousy (envy) and contention (rivalry and selfish ambition) there will also be confusion (unrest, disharmony, rebellion) and all sorts of evil practices. He oppressed the poor with every decision, they sought to get all they could from those who could least afford to give and then misused and abused everything they received.

- Covetousness: (James 4:2-3 AMP) (Verse 2) You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murders [To hate is to murder as far as your heart is concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask. [See 1 John 3:15]. (Verse 3) [Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet you fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose, and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is, [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures.

J. A. Thompson: Jehoiakim, who was only twenty-five years old when he began to reign and only thirty-six when he died (2 Ki. 23:36), was evidently a thoroughly spoiled and self-indulgent young despot. . . Panelling with cedar and painting with bright red or vermillion was a regular method of ornamentation (cf. Ezek. 23:14). . . To know God was to enter into a deep relationship of personal commitment, and this involved a concern to obey the stipulations of the covenant. In Jeremiah's view Josiah displayed such a knowledge. Jehoiakim did not.