

GET INTO SCRIPTURE - AN ANCIENT FORM OF TEXT MESSAGING

THE MBPC TEXTER

MOUNTAIN BROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH/ BIRMINGHAM AL



Sunday, September 15th
24th Sunday in Ordinary Times

Reading 1

JEREMIAH 4:11-12, 22-28

11 At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot wind comes from me out of the bare heights[a] in the desert toward my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse
12 a wind too strong for that. Now it is I who speak in judgment against them.
22 “For my people are foolish, they do not know me; they are stupid children, they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil, but do not know how to do good.”
23 I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light.

24 I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro.
25 I looked, and lo, there was no one at all, and all the birds of the air had fled.
26 I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger.
27 For thus says the Lord: The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end.
28 Because of this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above grow black; for I have spoken, I have purposed; I have not relented nor will I turn back.

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ABOUT THE READING

Part of the prophetic inspiration of the Hebrew people was to recognize that life has always been and will always be dependent on the utterances of God. The Gospel-writers recount Jesus as confessing as much when he quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to the demon in the wilderness, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " (Mt 4:4)

The stereotypical "doom and gloom" rant has done much to harm peoples' perception of God's nature and character in relation to humankind. Moreover, the underlying assumption behind this type of sermon provides an unbalanced view of our nature--that it is primarily sinful and always bent on evil. Such predispositions against divine judgment make it difficult for us to hear the profound truth that lies within these often difficult texts.

Jeremiah 4 provides us with much to ponder on the nature of divine judgment. First, God's judgment causes us to take a sobering look at the consequences of our failures as human beings, speaking the plain truth about the outcomes of our shortsightedness. Second, judgment pushes us to take responsibility for these failings, to turn from our destructive ways and make right what we have made wrong. Repentance is simultaneously turning from evil and turning toward good. Finally, God's judgment makes us aware of the fact that human sinfulness is not simply about individual morality. Obedience to God's covenant is intimately connected to our relationship with creation.

others and to the created order. When things are not right among humans, the whole earth groans. We are answerable not just to ourselves as individuals, but we are accountable to all our fellow human beings and to the earth from which we came. When we inflict violence on each other, we hurt the earth. When we abuse God's good creation, we damage ourselves. Knowing God, by the prophetic definition, means that we act justly with each other and live responsibly in relationship to all of God's



READING 2

PSALM 14

1 Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. 2 The Lord looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God. 3 They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one. 4 Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord? 5 There they shall be in great terror, for God is with the company of the righteous. 6 You would confound the plans of the poor, but the Lord is their refuge. 7 O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

ABOUT THE READING

Many would take this Psalm and throw it at atheists and non-believers but that is not the case. The issue with our modern English language is that sometimes a deeper meaning is hidden in our modern use of words. The word "fool" for example: A fool (Hebrew "nabal") is a person who has a problem in his or her heart more than in the head. He does not take God into account as he goes about living and is therefore morally insensitive. He may or may not really be an atheist, and he is not necessarily ignorant, but he lives as though there is no God. This conclusion leads him to disregard the revelations

Of course, this is not to accuse all atheists of being immoral people. The emphasis is that those who claim "there is no God" believe and live in a way that is opposed to God's plan for our lives. Whether an atheist lives immorally or not, the claim is true that to live as if God does not exist stands opposed to the teachings of God's Word.

In this text the sinner happens to be the fool in question. But the point is that any of us can be fools if we go against the words of the Lord. A believer or not can be a foolish sinner by disregarding higher judgement.



Reading 1

JEREMIAH 4:11-12, 22-28

Commentary, Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28, Anatheia Portier-Young, at WorkingPreacher.org, Luther Seminary, 2016.

Pulpit Fiction, with podcast. Reflections of lectionary text, pop culture, current events, etc. Robb McCoy and Eric Fistler, 2016.

Commentary, Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28 | Rev. J. Thomas Johnson | Pastor of New Beginnings Church of the Nazarene | A Plain Account, 2016

Commentary, Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28, Alphonetta Wines, at WorkingPreacher.org, Luther Seminary, 2013.

"A Return to Chaos?" John Holbert, Opening the Old Testament, 2013.

God and Vengeance, Steve Godfrey, Church in the World, 2013.

READING 2

PSALM 14

Pulpit Fiction, with podcast. Reflections of lectionary text, pop culture, current events, etc. Robb McCoy and Eric Fistler, 2016.

The Center for Excellence in Preaching, Doug Bratt, resources from Calvin Theological Seminary: Comments & Observations, Textual Points, illustration ideas, 2015.

Pulpit Fiction, plus podcast. Reflections of lectionary text, pop culture, current events, etc. Robb McCoy and Eric Fistler, 2015.

"All Fall Short," meditations on the Psalms by Sylvia Purdie, 2015.

"It's Me, O Lord," Alan Brehm, The Waking Dreamer, 2013.

The Timeless Psalms: Psalm 14, Joan Stott, prayers and meditations based on lectionary Psalms, 2013.

