

## John 12:20-33

Jeremiah is sometimes known as the weeping prophet...because at THAT time in Jewish history the First temple was destroyed, and the Hebrew people were brought into captivity to Babylon...so now what do you do with that?

The Babylonians destroyed the temple...the physical place where God and the laws dwelled...it was gone...no more! What happens when we localize God to a physical place on earth, or try to capture God in a certain time or place...

But now through the death of the temple...the death of God's dwelling place on earth...into this place of brokenness and despair something new springs forth...a new consciousness where God goes from a single point in time and space to where this idea of God is now let loose into the world through God's people themselves. They themselves become the locus of God's laws.

The law moves from the temple and priestly authority to now dwell inside each one of them. It goes from a belief into an experience. It goes from the head to the heart. From a series of laws into a series of practices. The theological folks here would say from Orthodoxy to Orthopraxy! From right belief into right action.

Remember throughout the Old Testament God's covenants are used to help the people understand their relationship with God. God will now place divine law into the hearts of people.

A frequent theme in Jeremiah and Ezekiel is this association between God and the people belonging to each other...and a relationship of belonging is at the core element of this new covenant...the relationship now becomes internalized...

I don't need the rules anymore...it's like after two people get married, the idea is they now internalize their love, they shouldn't have to refer to a set of rules and vows...

Those vows then may later serve to remind them... but their love for each other is now transformed...and once they are joined in this way... look at their potential together as one! Just look at your children!

Now the irony is, that at the time of Jeremiah, the people of God were physically enslaved...far from their homes...yet through this new covenant...right in the midst all of their brokenness...when their world view had been shattered...it is into this brokenness that they are set free and are at peace.

Ann Frank, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Coptic Egyptian Christians who were executed by ISIS...Jesus on the cross...they all were granted this spiritual awakening... freedom right in the midst of their brokenness and oppression.

...and so the story then goes...that the Hebrews eventually returned back to Jerusalem...they rebuilt the temple...and went right back to their old ways...and here comes Jesus now to remind them to once again put the law into their hearts...setting God's people free once more...and what have we done since then...Have Christians today focused on right actions or right belief...is God in our hearts or in our institutions?

Consider the religious wars playing out all over our planet. Between Christians and other faith's...between Christian and Christian. All these religious organizations believe they have it right don't they...a lock on God's truth and love...as if a parent can only loves one of their children!

Self-Righteousness will always lead to pain, hurt, divisiveness, judgment, prejudice, and exclusion.

Nothing has changed much has it? Jesus reminds us that in order to grow and produce fruit we must die to this type of thinking and action...we must transcend our human systems and our own limited views of the world.

What would it be like to live as if God's laws resided within our hearts? Living within creation and not above it! Would we cherish our neighbors and those who were different from us? Would we cherish all of creation...and the planet we all share? What if we lived with restraint and humility...living for the whole of creation not just our own little corner of it.

I saw a cartoon with four men in a boat...it was tilted up and sinking so that the two men at the bottom were feverishly trying to drain the water out with their buckets...the other two men sat smugly at the top of the boat saying glad we don't have to deal with their issues down there. We are all in the same boat people.

Lent is coming to a close...we have spent 40 days in the wilderness, 40 days in the dessert to still our minds and to put aside our egos. Repenting, in Greek *metanoia*, meaning to change you point of view, to turn around...to see things from a different perspective...Awaiting then for our true selves to emerge.

The self that is connected with the divine, the self that is connected with the whole of creation...the self that contains God's laws written into the very center of our being.

It is here in the desert, right here in the midst of pandemics and wars that the way of the ego and the ways of the world dissolve in the harsh quietness...It is sometimes when our bodies are not our own that we come to hear that still small voice that whispers you are my son, you are my daughter, you belong with me, and I with you...you are free!

So why do we come to church, why do we read the bible, why do we go through lent? See dying to oneself is a process. The seed of the divine is contained within each one of you. It is in these disciplines that we intentionally water and shine light on that seed...and that which we tend with intention will grow. You will reap what you sow!

Here in this wilderness far from that place which our egos call home, we can reimagine, reshape, and recreate our worldview. To see the world anew - transformed into the very image of God.

It's like raindrops falling onto parched ground...at first they disappear into the dryness of the earth...but then a small pool begins to form...soon grass and vegetation take hold...the vegetation grows and attracts wildlife...a new environment is created...a whole new world...a Genesis.

John's story of Jesus makes it clear...that the incarnation of God through Jesus is the intentional movement to reconcile creation and humanity to God Self...but first we must empty ourselves to make room for something new besides our ego this Self-emptying in Greek is called Kenosis...an open surrendering Love (agape).

And this love transcends our earthly situations and the constructs of our fragile systems and egos. The only way beyond this...is to die...and Jesus walks this familiar path through suffering and death in order to redeem and reconcile the world.

And Jesus, like the Hebrew people before him, will be taken captive. He will be broken and oppressed. But no matter what forces of evil or earthly powers accost Him...The covenant of God still holds true! No one can touch God's Self contained within Jesus...and when God-self dies the entire earth is once again reborn. The temple will tear open once again and God will once again pour forth into the world and into our hearts.

See you and I my friends are the new temples that Jesus bore into the world...and we are all invited into this reality...some of us literally and some of us figuratively.

This is first made clear in our Baptism where we shine the light of Christ onto the divine seed that each one of us carries inside...it will take our lifetimes to

take that seed and transform it into an oasis for all God's creation to take refuge in.

The world that Jesus is sent to redeem is a fallen realm that exists apart from God's will...organized in opposition to God's purpose...focused on power and wealth...focused on a few at the expense of all.

Just look at our corporations and governments, false entities which have more rights than people do...making decisions based on their self-preservation at the expense of people and the whole of creation.

This worldview is concretely embodied within our own structures and institutions. They institutions aggressively shape our lives and hold human beings captive in its ways...especially if you don't belong to the people groups in power.

Things like racism (any ism)...These are systems of earthly power...then...and now... that perpetuates themselves through domination, control, violence and death.

The "system" is one of consumption and competition where few win and so many lose... and the hallmark of such a system is violence and fear.

See the way that these systems keep themselves in power is through violently defeating opposition. Eliminating any threats...this system 2000 years ago eliminated Jesus in order preserve the power and status quo.

And today our system really looks no different than the system in Jesus' day or in Jeremiah's day...see just the name and faces change but the systems in the kingdom of man never do.

Look at our own foreign policies, our criminal system, our video games, our cartoons, our superheroes, our sports figures, our business models...do they look like God's intent for creation or our constructed reality?

We keep falling back into the same destructive, self-focused cycle over and over again...one focused on my will for ME, and not God's will for ALL.

But the good news is that what we fear, what disheartens us... is only just an illusion...we are not human beings having a spiritual experience but rather spiritual beings having a human experience...we just keep looking through the wrong end of the telescope searching for God...repent...turn the lens around and you will find God right in front of you.

Within your heart dwells the divine...where no man or system can oppress! You are free, you belong, you matter...and now you must nurture that seed within you.

How many people want to belong, or want freedom from oppression, how many people have been crushed by the system? We could all use a glimpse of the kingdom of God...but first we must die to the ways of man... to include the egos we have constructed and the system we all belong to.

Take an Antioch...There it sits...it can be preserved for 100's of years in a perfect & pristine state...WOW we can idolize it! ...so what happens to an acorn if I leave it here for another 100 years???

Now what happens to it if I plant it in the ground and care for it...what is its potential if it dies to being an acorn...dying to what it is right now? It has the potential to grow into a mighty oak tree creating thousands of acorns in it's lifetime...now what is your potential?!

See Jesus refused to be a part of the system even though he knew that it would physically kill him...but once Jesus dies look at the potential of Christ... look at God being born into the world...look at God being born in you and me...bringing about the kingdom of God for others to see.

What is your potential! What are you to become!

Jesus rejects power...rejects violence...rejects domination...He rejects judgment and divisiveness...He refuses to even acknowledge the system at all...Oh it tempts Him with worldly power, but Jesus always sees the world as it truly is. He shines a light on God's will for all of creation.

What could you become if you died to your guilt and shame...died to your addictions...your anger and resentment...your pride and prejudices...died to all your fears...What is your potential? What could you become?

God has not given up on us yet...On the cross Jesus dramatically exposes the system for what it is...not the ruler of the world, but an adversary to God's purpose (personified as Satan). Jesus sets us all free to die from the ways of man...transforming our brokenness...freeing us and showing us our true potential and nature as children of God.

Come experience the cross my friends for it is here...through brokenness... through dying... Right HERE... that you will find true salvation and freedom!

And it is here that you will BE transformed... and in doing so YOU will come to transform the world!

Your faithful servant,

carmen