

When God Seems Powerless

by Erlo Stegen

God's people are in a state of crisis, blind to their own sin, and God feels powerless to save them, leading to judgment and punishment.

Duration: 57:56

Scripture: Jeremiah 11:7, Jeremiah 14:7, Jeremiah 14:11, Matthew 5:23

Topics: "God's Power"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the lamentation of the people of God, Judah and Jerusalem, who were focused on their own troubles and loss but failed to recognize the evil of their own sin. God reveals himself to them as a wanderer, unable to show his might or provide for them due to their sin. The preacher emphasizes the importance of recognizing and mourning personal sins rather than solely focusing on external conditions. The sermon encourages listeners, especially young people, to take note of this message and to prioritize repentance and mourning for personal sins.

Transcript

Zifunde kuzugele ebesiles kombis We read from verse 7, Jeremias 11 verse 7 But I'm going to emphasise and make the theme rather be from the second part of verse 8 Nomai zono zetuzifagazangati sebenzachehofagengayekamalaku Ngoguba ugusleta kwetu, ugusleta kwetu, kuningi sonilevue Temba liga Israeli, msidisi wake ngeskati sokshupeka Yini nakogugusemko, yinuguba ubejongumfogazi ezweini Nanjengesihambi esingenisai, uguba silale ugusugunjena Although our iniquities testify against us, O Lord, act for Thy name's sake Truly our apostasies have been many, we have sinned against Thee Thou, hope of Israel, its Saviour in time of distress Why art Thou like a stranger in the land, or like a traveller who has pitched his tent for the night?

Yinuguba ube umuntu, umuntu, titegileu, dengekawe, elenge na usingisana Why art Thou like a man dismayed, like a mighty man who cannot save No kupagati kwe tuteho, fasibiziwe nge kamalako, ungasishi Yet Thou art in our midst, O Lord, and we are called by Thy name, do not forsake us We'll read thus far Angaz kutugunga agi, kulesi zintugu, mshangabesa nanalelis I don't know how often these days I have met up with this verse Nomangiti kose, ngesoto, nzokulumangagopi ngesuge, ntoleleleliswi Nomangiti galvuri paipele, nvulege kulendaw This text has just stood out for me, and every time I prayed about this service, I was led by the Lord back to it again Ngasegitikulungilege kose, ngokufumagwako, nzokulumangagopi So I said, Lord, it's fine, if You will that I should speak about it, so be it Umbuzo ilo,

inuguba ubegen umfogazi, ezweini, kehofa The question is this, why art Thou like a stranger in the land?

Or like a traveler who has pitched his tent for the night? Why art Thou like a man dismayed, like a mighty man who cannot save? Do you hear this matter? It is of greatest importance It's as if every Christian needs to read and understand this text For here we find God among His people For it does say, Nevertheless, O Lord, Thou art in our midst But He is in their midst as a stranger is Like a stranger to his own people What a weird thing That the Lord should be in the midst of His people and yet feel like a foreigner, a wanderer, one who is just a stranger Try and paint the picture God Almighty, Maker of all things, the One who owns the earth and the fullness thereof The One who is omnipotent The One who has conquered sin, hell, death and the world And yet is as a foreigner amongst His own people Many people do say, The Lord is in our midst but He is there as a stranger And like a wanderer who only pitches his tent at night A traveler is one who is in need of a place to stay because he is on a journey He will sleep overnight but the next morning he is off on his way So the first picture painted here for us is of the Lord God Almighty as a stranger, a wanderer in the midst of His people And secondly, the second picture painted for us is that He is one who is just traveling through Not one of the place who belongs there but one who just sleeps overnight and continues his journey These people are to be His people, the place is His place But no fear, He is not staying there, He is just wandering and passing by Thirdly, the picture painted for us is that He is among them like one who is dismayed and confused There are many illustrations of Jesus, of Him standing at the door knocking Of Him shepherding His sheep but never have I seen an illustration painted of Him being bewildered and confused among His people Yes, being among His people but like a stranger, like a traveler He is there but like a stranger is from a foreign place and this isn't His custom These are not His ways, so too He is among His people as one who is just from another place, He doesn't feel at home there And like a mighty man who cannot save His people Ask yourself, isn't God like that in your life?

One who is powerful But He cannot help, He cannot intervene and save Your confidence that He is in your midst is but trite because He is there but like one who is bound and cannot save He is a mighty man, that mighty man is in you, mighty to save, you claim that He saved you but He can't save others through you He can't save, He is a mighty powerful man but where is that power in your life? Where is it? Ask whether the almighty God in you is as a stranger Ask whether He isn't just a traveler in you Like a wanderer, like a traveler in your own life In you, but like one who is just passing by He is like one who is confused for you yourself are confused What can one say about this matter?

That He should be dismayed and bewildered in your life He is a mighty man, a hero and yet in your life it's like He is powerless to do anything We can look at it from the point of view of your very own life We could take it in your marriage, perhaps looking at your marriage, you and your spouse We could look at it from the point of view of you and your family and children We can illustrate it with you and your church If He is in our midst as the almighty, the one who possesses all power Not just as a stranger If He is like just a traveler in your life, that means that you are the owner You are the one who calls the shots, you are the one who owns the bed, not Him He is just a traveler, a stranger He can say nothing He can say nothing, He is like one who is bound, there is no authority there If you cannot hear this, come and pray, come after the service, receive prayer Maybe there are demons blocking your ability to listen You are here You do bring Him in, you say well shame, what a pity that He should be outside And you bring Him in and you offer Him a night's sleep But He is a foreigner and you are the one who is calling the shots And even if He is there in your life, He is as one who is dismayed and bewildered and confused And you can't get a clear message from Him He is a mighty man He is omnipotent, almighty, has all authority And yet in your life,

He can do nothing, He is weak, has no power I have been pondering about this text much in the past days Looking at how God is treated He seems to be there but like a stranger, like one who is confused And it's as if though you are the one who does things What matters is your will, what you like to do, not Him God is revealing Himself to His people God is revealing Himself to His people To illustrate how He is in their midst, what the conditions are like, how He is living there Is there one who is more troubled than this one painted before us here?

God is troubled here, man of sorrows, a stranger, a wanderer And then God says, this is what I am like in the midst of My people We are satisfied, all is proceeding well But when He reveals Himself through the prophet writing here And to His people in this statement He shows Himself as a stranger One who is a wanderer and no place to make Himself at home One who is mighty and yet disabled One who is mighty to save and is there but is confused and dismayed Examine your own life and ask, does this paint a familiar picture for me?

Is this what God is like in me? Is this what God is like in me? Yes, this is what God is like in me Nothing happens in your church, the same old people are there, no young people are being saved I say of such a church, there is no growth, it must be dead It's like I could take all preachers and say, is this a depiction of your church? But this is being directed at you You are the ones hearing this now And you need to ask the question, is God like one dismayed, powerless, a stranger in my life?

But now I'd like to examine a little the context from which this text is taken What is Judah and Jerusalem like? How come God should be like this to them? God came to Jeremiah in a crisis time, when God's people were in a time of drought, inflation was at an all time high, they were starving, the conditions were awful It is amazing, for we find here that it was a time of famine, a time where they couldn't afford things, and of drought Now that word drought can be translated as well, one interpreter said, it was a time of withholding That God was withholding the food, God was withholding the rain, that's also the meaning of that And to Judah and Jerusalem, it was a time of great need, where they cried out and complained about their crisis time Saying, oh God, show mercy, what's happening to us?

When they came together in Jerusalem to pray for rain, to pray for the things God was withholding from them So they cried and wept before God, had this prayer meeting about the very things that God was withholding from them And it says, even the gates of Jerusalem were down hearted All sorts of people from other nations, from other groups were coming in through the gates, coming this way to and fro Why? Because God's people were in need, they could not provide for themselves, they were starving, they needed water, and so other nations now had to help them And I dare say that the church hasn't even got what they need, and they've got to go to other churches to fight, to say something, to live on, and to stay alive Because it's like dead inside And in verse 2b, that is of our text, it says of chapter 14, 2b it says that they've come to the cisterns, found no water, they've been put to shame, and they sit on the ground in mourning, and the cry of Jerusalem has ascended They sit around on the ground mourning, and as they languish, they send their messengers pleading for help from outsiders Judah mourns like one who has lost their child Like a family that's been devastated by loss, I heard these days of a family where that's actually happened They've suffered the loss now of all their children, and the final child, the lost child has now died, and they languish in their sorrow But though Judah mourns, take note that she laments not about herself, but about her children Just imagine, people in tears, not because of their sin, but because of their problems Do you take note?

Then Jeremiah responds, and says, ah, Lord God, behold. The prophets, Lord, are telling them, you will not see the sword, nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place. Here's something that really breaks one's heart.

It breaks one's heart that right there in the midst of them, there where Jeremiah was, there in Jerusalem, were prophets who were denying what God was saying, and what the Lord was saying through Jeremiah. And they said, no, it is not the case. It is not the case.

Brethren, beware. Remember that false prophets arise from your very midst. And here we find the case where they say, no, what Jeremiah is saying is wrong.

Everything is going to be okay. Last Sunday, we read from the letter to Jude, by Jude. I am a prophet.

Where Jude warns them and says, be careful of those who creep into your midst and say things which are not from God, false prophets. Paul also warns of such people. Jeremiah, here you find the same.

So you be careful, for there are none so foolish as prophets who do not say what God says. Here they say, no, there is going to be no famine. There is no problem.

The famine was already starting. It was already there. But they are blind to the obvious.

And we will not rest until such people are dead. But even when they are dead, you will find new ones will arise in their place to speak what is in opposition to God Almighty. And here the prophet Jeremiah says, Look at what the prophets are telling them, for they speak the opposite to what you say.

And then the Lord spoke to me, saying in verse 14, The prophets are prophesying falsehood in my name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them. They are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds.

I speak from the deception that is within them. Therefore God says concerning the prophets whom he had not sent, Those prophets who had said, There shall be no sword or famine in this land. The Lord says, By sword and famine, these very prophets shall meet their end.

The very thing which they utter prophecies about that shall never happen will be the thing which destroys them. It's many years. I'm not sure of how many but many.

When a person rose up and said, So and so is off the track, that person is on the wrong road and they're going to die. It didn't take long and that person died, that very same person who spoke the words. I was asked to speak at his grave.

Till today his prophecy has not been fulfilled and yet many years have gone by since he died his own grave is full of white bones. Beware of that powerful thing that you predict about somebody else because God can turn the that very thing around and it will be your end. That will be the thing that decapitates you like the Muslims behead people.

That very thing of yours will be what decapitates you. Therefore be very careful of going around spreading predictions and saying this is going to happen, that's going to happen, that very thing can explode in your own hands. And the person will claim I'm sent of God but as you consider their lives and look at them you think well God is just a stranger to this person.

The Lord is not present in his mighty power. This person is like one. This person's God is unconscious, asleep.

One can find no evidence of God speaking for he is not conscious to speak anything. You find many such people. Jesus is confused.

They go to that person and they go there and they try this out and they try that. They go from one thing to the other and they are in a state of confusion. There is no battle like the battle of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And there are no soldiers as powerful as those who are soldiers of our Lord Jesus Christ. But what type of soldier are you? For how many years haven't you been saved where you can give your testimony and say how you found the Lord but what evidence is there of the Lord working mightily in your life? Where are the others who found the Lord? What has the Lord been able to do through you? Yes, he's come to you, he's entered your life to sleep during the night, to sleep. He came into your life just as a wanderer.

He's just a visitor in your life. And you are feeling quite good about being hospitable to the stranger. He's unconscious but he's only going to sleep the night.

He's a wanderer, he's a stranger in your home. He's not the owner of your home. He doesn't possess you.

I would be delighted if there's even one who would wake up out of the sleep, just one who can take seriously what God's word says and ask himself, is my Jesus just asleep? Is he just a stranger to me? That you would be so profoundly changed that every person and even the rats will notice the change. Even the mules of that day complained because of the condition of God's word. Dear friend, if you are not what you are supposed to be, you don't realize what far-reaching effects that has got.

Even the donkeys and the wild animals will moan and groan because of you. Do you want to tell me that all that happens in your life is that what God can do? Look here, he's a strong man, a mighty man, a hero to save. But maybe he's not only failed in saving others through you.

Maybe he has even failed in saving you. Maybe you are not properly saved. Let's close our eyes and pray.

Oh God, may this service not have been in vain to us. Give us ears to hear, eyes to see and minds to take in what you have proclaimed. Lord, I would pray, and if it would go according to me, I would wish, Lord, that not one here would be influenced by those who are false and that which is not true, or even be a propagator himself of that which is a lie.

Amen.

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