

The Power of Weeping

by Michael Youssef

Michael Youssef's sermon emphasizes the urgent need for the church to weep over its spiritual condition and return to the truth of the gospel.

Duration: 20:48

Scripture: Proverbs 8:13, Jeremiah 9:1, Matthew 22:37, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 9:16, 2 Timothy 4:2, James 4:10

Topics: "Church Revival", "Spiritual Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses deep concern and lament over the current condition of the Church of Jesus Christ. He urges the audience not to dismiss his words as judgmental or negative, but rather to share his concern and join him in sounding the alarm. The speaker criticizes the church for its spiritual apathy, reliance on statistics and entertainment, and focus on profitability rather than biblical truth. He emphasizes the need for repentance and turning to God, and confesses his own journey of realizing the importance of tears and vulnerability in his ministry.

Transcript

Thank you so much. It's an honor and a privilege to be with you. And especially I'm honored to share this platform tonight with a lady whom I consider to be a dear friend and I have respected her for many years.

She is truly a woman who stands firm for the truth of the Bible and yet she's so gracious about it. Janet Parshall and I'm so honored to be here with her. I have been a member in NRB for probably 20 years, not quite 20 years, almost there.

But since I'm peering into my 60 years, I figure out that it will be another 20 years before I get invited to address you again. At that time I'll be 80 and most likely I'll be with the Lord. So I thought I'll come and tell you what's on my heart today because I might not have another chance to tell you.

I want to open my heart to you and I wanted to talk to you about many things and there are a lot of things on my heart but time is limited. They gave me 20 minutes so I'm going to give you 10 minutes back and that will add to 30. No, don't panic.

But chiefly what's on my heart is this. It is a grieving over the condition of the church of Jesus Christ. This is not a sermon that I've delivered half a dozen times.

God gave me this word for you tonight. And the cry of my heart and the plea of my spirit is this, that you do not interpret what I'm about to say as being judgmental or critical as much as a condition of lamenting. I plead with you not to dismiss this as being negative.

I'm one of the most positive persons around. My hope is this, that you would share my concern and that you would join with me in sounding the alarm across the land so that the body of Christ would awake from the spiritual apathy that seems to be in today and begin to recapture the vision of being unashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ without exception.

As I look at the mainline denominations to which I used to belong, as I look at the so-called evangelical church, which seem to be a catch-all these days, and as I carefully listen to the still illuminaries in the orbit of Christian media, I often find myself wanting to say with the prophet Jeremiah chapter 9 verse 1, oh, that my head is water and my eyes a fountain of tears so that I might weep day and night over the slaying of my people. All of us here have spiritual discernment. Every one of us in this place, in this convention, can identify with those words if you focus on them very closely.

I know that the context is not exactly the same as ours, but the danger is just as real. That the details of his time differ from ours, but the warning is just as dire. The ecclesiology might differ, but certainly the conditions share distinct similarities.

What was their problem? God's own people were turning away from the demands of the faith into an imitation of the truth. And my beloved friends, the Bible calls that idolatry. The preachers in Jeremiah's days were telling them back then that non-believers need to feel at home in the church.

That these priests and the prophets that are paid by the states were telling them that non-believers must not feel offended. God forbid that they may even come under conviction and repent and turn from their sins. Preachers were certainly entertaining the crowd, not preaching the truth.

They were leaning on man's power, not the everlasting arms. They were learning to communicate, not from John the Baptist, but from John Jay Leno. It is not surprising, therefore, that God's own people were opting for religious idols and idolatry instead of the true God.

Their own prophets have falsified the truth of the gospel. Their prophets were prophesying peace, peace when there is no peace. Their prophets were drawing large crowds to hear this message of feel good and look good.

Repentance and brokenness before God and over sin have become strange words. They have become strange and alien concepts. The repentance was not in their lexicon.

In the name of cultural relevance, a similar gospel has emerged. A similar word came to them. And the real one has been so scorned and so belittled as harsh and negative.

God's own people became misled by the cacophony of voices. Preach to them that all the blessings they can get from God, they can get in this life. What is even worse, God's own people were being oblivious to the abysmal condition and the abysmal spiritual condition in which they lived.

They were oblivious to their awaiting judgment. They were too busy building their net worth. They were too busy with the message of that you can get it all and you can get it now.

Oh, that was even worse than that. They actually confused material prosperity with eternal life. Jeremiah, a lone voice, kept on warning them about the judgment of God that is coming.

Jeremiah kept on warning them that the Babylonians are coming, that the Babylonians are going to be God's instrument of his judgment. But because they have opted instead to listen to the positive thinking preachers, they were listening to the peace, peace and prosperity. They opted to listen to those prophets who would tell them that they can think and grow rich, that if their mind can conceive it, they can achieve it, that they can presume on God's grace without shame, that they can live any which way they want and God will not judge them.

After all, they said, we are the chosen people. We are God's favorite people. We are invincible.

We are indestructible. And meanwhile, Jeremiah kept on weeping uncontrollably according to one translation. Oh, that my head is water and my eyes a fountain of tears so that I might weep day and night over what not only the condition they were in, but what they're going to suffer.

And so we asked Jeremiah, Jeremiah, what are you weeping for? Jeremiah, what's wrong with you? Jeremiah, why do you have to dwell on the negative side of things? Jeremiah, don't you know that sin is such a negative concept and ought not to be preached? Don't you understand that preaching of sin and repentance will not draw a crowd? Don't you know, Jeremiah, that it is better to preach positive things like God is under obligation to prosper you, that God is under obligation to bless you, that God is under obligation to heal you, that God is under obligation to make you happy. Jeremiah, don't you understand that all you need to do is blab it and grab it and then give God lip service. Jeremiah, don't you understand, what's wrong with you, Jeremiah? This weeping prophet would say, all that you would understand, it breaks God's heart to have to use the terrorists, the Babylonians to humble you.

It breaks God's heart to have to use the terrorists, Babylonians to judge you. It breaks God's heart to have to use unbelievers to mock His children's lack of integrity. It breaks God's heart to have to use pagans in the media to ridicule His children's hypocrisy.

It breaks God's heart to have to send bloodthirsty murderers to taunt you. Oh, that my head is water and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I'm weep day and night. But beloved, listen, if God is God, judgment is a must.

Beloved friends, I'm not reluctant to blame the Supreme Court or the politicians at large over the condition, the moral disarray in the nation. But let's be truthful with one another. The main reason we are experiencing moral decline in this great nation must be set fairly and squarely upon those of us who are Christian leaders.

Denomination after denomination have sold their birthrights and the so-called evangelicals have opted for strategic silence and moral neutrality in wanting to be user-friendly, in seeking to be accepted and praised by the world. They have befriended the world and scorned the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14, 8, if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle? Oh, that my head is water and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I'm a weep day and night.

So you ask Jeremiah again, why? Why all of this weeping? He would tell us, as he says in chapter 2, verse 13, God said, because my people, my chosen people, my elect people, my predestined people, my people whom I have foreknown before the creation of the world, they have exchanged their prayer closets

for marketing strategy. They have traded power with God for power with man. They have leaned not on the everlasting arm, but they have leaned on the arms of what works.

They have leaned on the arms of entertainment. They have leaned on the arms of what appeals to the flesh. Oh, yes, they have despised suffering with Christ so that they may reign and rule with Christ.

They have bought into the lie that says, God wants you to be happy, not holy. They have bought into the lie that says, give the consumer what they want, not what they need. They have bought into the lie that says, treat your customers with kid gloves so that they might come back to you.

Have we forgotten that only God's Christ can convert us all, and none of this can convert anybody. For we have allowed the church to function by statistics, focus group, and polls instead of going on our knees. We have replaced a mourner's bench for the stage of entertainment.

We have worshipped at the altar of what works, not what's biblical. We have focused on what is profitable, not what's prophetic. We have plunged headlong into what sells, not what leads to repentance and turning to the living God.

Oh, that my head is water and my eyes a fountain of tears so that I might weep day and night over my people. You know, a simpleton immigrant like me have often wondered, why is it that the more we focus on communication and marriage, the higher the divorce rate climbs? Why is it that the more we focus on money, the higher the rate of debt? Why is it the more we focus on looking good and feeling good, the more discontented God's people are? Why is it that the more we focus on meeting perceived needs, the more desperate and depressed and the more unfulfilled God's people are? Could it be that we have forgotten that the Lord's instruction that only when you seek first and foremost His kingdom and His righteousness, that all of our real need will be met by His glory and height of power? I pray God, help us to heed this warning while it is yet there's a chance. May the body of Christ turn to the Lord while it's said opportunity.

Listen, I don't consider myself a prophet nor a son of a prophet, but I do obey the voice of God when I discern it. Let me give you an example very quickly and I'm watching my time. Back in 1982, I was invited to meet with some decision makers in Washington, D.C. by a man who's still my dear friend today.

I arrived with evidence in tow that Islamic expansion was on the march. They just marked those dates, 1982. And this group that has met and launched that, they were not the terrorists, they were not all these people that you hear about in the news.

These were leaders. Those were funded by those who so-called our allies. And I pleaded with them.

They said the third jihad is coming in their meeting in Geneva. And I was telling these folks the first jihad was back in the late 600s. The second jihad was back in the 1500s by the Turks.

And they feel that Europe is now going to be the next prize of that third jihad. I'm going to spare you the details. After hours of trying to warn these thoughtful people of the danger that is lurking in the dark, having failed to get them even to listen and to think, I got up and as I was leaving, I said, 20 years from now, we will regret the ignoring of the facts.

Now, of course, everybody is aware of the danger. Nobody can be blinded to it. We all know it.

And yet, it appears to me at least that today, most Americans and evangelicals included are as if sleepwalking. They appear to me at least they are to be high on false expectations and soothe words from puppets. It appears to me at least that the sentimentality that is choking America right now is the same sentimentality that's choking the evangelical church.

I remember going back to my hotel room on that night in 1982 and weeping like Jeremiah. And I heard the Lord to be saying, you go preach the gospel with all of its truth, the whole counsel of God, leaving nothing out. And for the preaching of that gospel, I was called every name in the book.

In my denomination that I used to belong to, I was called the bigot, arrogant, narrow-minded, homophobe, and these were just the nice words. But I rejoiced every time I heard these words. But the saddest thing to me was, even my fellow evangelicals have said to me, what you don't understand, Michael, is this, back then, that in-your-face preaching like you're doing will not draw your crowd.

And listen, that's why I am so grateful to the thousands of people, to God for them who come every Sunday morning to the Church of the Apostles and thousands of churches across the land that pastored by pastors who have not bent their knees to modern-day Baal and many of them in this room tonight. Amen, amen. Give God praise.

I was told that preaching on hell is an old fashion. It will turn people off. I was told that blunt preaching on salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ alone will turn people off.

I was told that if I keep on preaching repentance, I will have no one to hear me. I was told that unless I preach a message that its edges have been softened in order to appeal to the post-modern culture of the 21st century, that I will fail. Thank God, so far, I haven't failed.

As I remembered thinking of Jeremiah many a times when he said, oh, that my head is water and my eyes a fountain of tears to weep day and night over the condition of my people. Please hear me out on this one. I don't want to be a prophet of doom any more than Jeremiah wanted to be.

Like many others, I want to be liked. Like many others, I want to be accepted. Like many others, I'm often tempted to preach that which appeals to the feel good, look good mentality.

But oh, what would I do with the white throne judgment? What will I say on that day? God's word to me and to every one of us here and to the body of Christ across the land. Be faithful to Him first and foremost. Preach His gospel with all of its demands.

Cry to Him alone for success. Love sinners and keep on hating sin even if it is in your life. Humble yourself before Him alone.

Lean on Him alone. Resist the temptation of wanting to be a paid professionals and be the servants of the living God. But above all, love Him with all of your heart.

For woe unto us, woe unto all of us who under the guise of relevance soften the sharp edges of the gospel message. Woe unto us when we think that we must focus our programs on whatever brings up the ratings. Woe unto us when we think that we must scorn the foolishness of preaching because it's unprofitable.

Listen to me, God gave you your radio stations. God gave you your television stations. God gave you the ministries that you have.

It's not our ministry, it is God's ministry. And He gave it to us. And He can take it away in a flash.

Oh, that my head is water and my eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night. But before I finish, and I'm about to finish, I have a conclusion. I have a confession to make.

I have a confession to make. It was about 15 years ago that I felt that tears were not cool. I was embarrassed about weeping in public, particularly when I'm pleading with people to turn to the living God and repent.

And I used to get depressed in the afternoons. And then I took time and fasted and prayed and God rebuked me. He said, if I dry your tears, I'll freeze your heart.

And I said, Lord, forgive me. There's nothing wrong with tears. There's a lot of good in tears.

According to Psalm 80, tears that are shed over the work of God and the people of God are marks of humility. Jesus wept over Jerusalem and I am convinced that He is weeping over His church today. He is weeping over His church today.

And the older I get, the more I long that in our ministries, that in our churches, that we would have less entertainment and more tears. That we would have less trivia and more depth. That we would have more desire to please God, not please the crowd.

Less sentimentality and more serious-mindedness. Less flirting with the world and more crying to God. For only then, only then we know that God will replace our tears with true joy.

Only then, only then He will draw near to us once again. Only then the Lord may respond to our tears. Only then the Lord will be pleased by our tears and send us a true and genuine Holy Spirit awakening.

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