

God's kindness is meant to lead to repentance

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn to our reading. Now, we are in the book of Jeremiah again, and we've reached chapter 27, which is on page 654. Now, I'm going to split the reading into two. It's quite a long reading.

Read chapter 27 just now, then we'll have a hymn, and then we'll also read chapter 28. So, Jeremiah chapter 27 on page 654.

I hope you're not getting mixed up with your Zedekiahs and your Jehoiakims and so on. I'll elucidate that a little bit later on, but don't worry.

In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord. Thus the Lord said to me, make yourselves straps and yoke bars and put them on your neck.

Send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the sons of Ammon, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon, by the hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem, to Zedekiah, king of Judah.

[1 : 1 2] Give them this charge for their masters. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, this is what you shall say to your masters. It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth with the men and the animals that are on the earth, and I give it to him ever it seems right to me.

Now I have given all these lands unto the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babel, and my servant. Now I have given him also the beasts of the fields to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes.

Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave. But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with a sword, with famine, and with pestilence, declares the Lord, until I have consumed it by his hand.

So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your fortune tellers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, you shall not serve the king of Babylon.

There is a lie they are prophesying to you with the result that you will remove far from your land, and I will drive you out and you will perish. But any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land to work it and dwell there, declares the Lord.

[2 : 4 2] To Zedekiah, king of Judah, I spoke in like manner. Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people and live. Why will you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as the Lord has spoken concerning any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?

Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, you shall not serve the king of Babylon, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you. I have not sent them, declares the Lord, but they are prophesying falsely in my name, with the result that I will drive you out and you will perish.

You and the prophets were prophesying to you. Then I spoke to the priests and to all these people, saying, Thus says the Lord, Do not listen to the words of your prophets who are prophesying to you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the Lord's house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you.

Do not listen to them. Serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should this city become a desolation? If they are prophets, and if the word of the Lord is with them, then let them intercede with the Lord of hosts, that the vessels that are left in the house of the Lord, in the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem, may not go to Babylon.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, concerning the pillars, the sea, the stands, and the rest of the vessels that are left in this city, which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, did not take away when he took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem.

[4 : 25] Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the Lord, in the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem.

They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day when I visit them, declares the Lord. Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.

Amen. So let's continue the reading then, and we'll read now chapter 28. The incident in chapter 28 follows very naturally from the words of chapter 27, so we'll take them together.

Chapter 28. In that same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the fifth month of the fourth year, Hananiah, the son of Azur, the prophet from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of all of the priests and all the people, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Within two years, I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took away from this place and carried to Babylon.

[5 : 45] I will also bring back to this place Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon, declares the Lord, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord. And the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen.

May the Lord do so. May the Lord make the words that you have prophesied come true and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord and all the exiles.

Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. Prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms.

As for the prophet who prophesied peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet.

[6 : 53] Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke bars from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet and broke them. And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus says the Lord, Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, from the neck of all the nations within two years.

But Jeremiah the prophet went his way. Sometime after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke bars from off the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah.

Go and tell Hananiah, Thus says the Lord, You have broken wooden bars, but you have made in their place bars of iron. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put upon the neck of all these nations an iron yoke to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and they shall serve him.

For I have given to him even the beasts of the field. And Jeremiah the prophet said to the prophet Hananiah, Listen, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, and you have made these people trust in a lie.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the Lord.

[8 : 15] That same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died. Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Now, perhaps we could have our Bibles open, please, at Jeremiah 27 and 28.

It's on page 6, 5, 4. And we'll have a moment of prayer before we look at the passage. Lord, we believe you have things to say to us, things that we need to hear.

And we believe too, Lord, that the evil one wants to snatch away the word that is sown. So we pray, Lord, that indeed the words that are spoken will be a living echo of your tone, that what is said will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen. When I studied English at St. Andrews about the time that Noah left the ark, I remember being very excited when I was browsing in the library and coming across a book with the title Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates.

I got it off the shelf with great excitement imagining this was going to be something about Shakespeare going off the Francis Drake or some other Elizabethan buccaneer and on the Spanish main so-called fighting the pirates.

[9 : 55] It was an exceedingly arid book about the pirated, the illegal editions of Shakespeare's plays, which means you do not judge a book by its title any more than by its cover.

an exciting title which failed to live up to the excitement it aroused. I often feel the titles that we are given in our Bibles are exactly the opposite.

They suggest that what follows is going to be immeasurable dullness. Look at chapter 27, the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar and then 28, Hananiah, the false prophet.

That has not filled anyone with wonder, love and praise, I imagine. Remember that in the Bible, apart from the headings in the Psalter, which are part of the inspired text, these headings are very often simply descriptive, descriptive titles which maybe tell us what the chapter is about in some sense, but don't get into the chapter or into the passage at all.

These two chapters contain big truths about God. It's not just about obscure politics of long ago. It does sound like that. Go and send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the sons of Ammon, the king of Tyre, and the kings of Sidon by the hands of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem for Zedekiah, king of Judah.

[11 : 22] We've got to get beyond that and see what this passage is saying. This passage is telling us about who and what God is. And in particular, the two twin truths that run through the whole Bible, the great truths that we confront every time we open the Scripture.

On the one hand, God is sovereign and will carry out his purposes. Nothing can prevent that. The Lord will work everything, as Paul says in Romans, according to the purposes of his will.

Nothing can stop that. But the other twin truth is that human beings are responsible. Because God works out everything, we are not robots. We have responsibilities.

And these two truths need to be held in tension all the time without the one ever destroying the other. If we so overemphasize God's sovereignty and shrug off our own responsibility, we're going to end up imagining we are robots.

We're on a tram line. We have no freedom at all to decide anything. On the other hand, if we overemphasize our freedom, we're actually going to make God into the robot who can only respond when we ask him to.

[12 : 38] I used to hear when I was a boy, preachers of the gospel would say something like this, Jesus will come into your heart if you will let him. Now there is truth in that, but it's not the whole truth, obviously.

We need to remember that only by grace, as the musicians were playing earlier, can we enter only because the Holy Spirit is already working in our hearts can we even begin to respond.

That's why my title for this evening is not the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar and Hananiah, the false prophet, but I've taken my title from Romans chapter 2, verse 4.

God's kindness is meant to lead to repentance. A great passage beginning in chapter 1 where Paul shows the whole world is guilty. God has concluded everyone guilty so that he might have mercy on all.

So here, both in chapter 27, which are the words of the Lord, and then the dramatic confrontation between Jeremiah and the false prophet in chapter 28, we have God's sovereignty working, but at the same time human responsibility being challenged.

[13 : 53] Let me just say a word about the politics in the background here. I said this so often that probably people are becoming weary of hearing this, but since I'm sure nobody remembers, let me say it again.

When the godly king Josiah died, he was followed by four nondescript and fairly useless individuals, and during the reign of the king who's here called chapter, verse 4 of chapter 20, Jeconiah, also called Jehoiakim, son of Jehoiakim, a large number of people were taken off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, including the prophet Daniel and his friends, very probably the prophet Ezekiel in that same group.

Nebuchadnezzar appointed this puppet king, Zedekiah, and Zedekiah was appointed because Nebuchadnezzar thought he'd be no trouble.

And what's happening here, obviously, is that Zedekiah is trying to build up an alliance against Babylon. Realize he can't take on Babylon on its own, neither can these petty kingdoms of Edom, Moab, Ammon, and so on, take on the great king of Babylon.

Now, there's an inbuilt insecurity about this, obviously. They're all old enemies. I mean, when you read these names like Edom and Ammon and Moab, they're all those enemies. But, of course, Zedekiah is trying to combine them into alliance and along with the kings of Tyre and Sidon, the great commercial power of the time.

[15 : 38] Now, here, as in chapter 13, Jeremiah is told not just to preach but to use a visual aid and this visual aid is a yoke around his neck and this yoke around his neck is a symbol that the nations are going to have to, are going to be enslaved by Nebuchadnezzar and in verse 3, he sends, he sends word of this to the envoys.

God has raised up Nebuchadnezzar and it's crazy to oppose him. So, that's the situation then. These petty kings are trying to form an alliance to beat the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah says, you're wasting your time. God has decreed this but, as we'll see, that doesn't mean that they don't have any responsibility. So, let's look at it then.

God's kindness is meant to lead to repentance and the first thing I want to say is that God rules everything. Put it another way, he is Lord of creation and history.

Verse 4 of 27. Give them this charge for their masters. Thus said Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, this is what you shall say to your masters.

[16 : 50] It is I who by my great power and outstretched arm have made the earth with the men and the animals that are on this earth. God has made creation, he's made history and he controls it and this is repeated in the remarkable words of verse 6.

I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant. This is a mixture of creation and Exodus language. We say, look, I'm the same God who made heaven and earth.

I'm the same God who led the people of Israel out of Egypt under Moses. In other words, I'm still on the throne. I'm just as much the Lord as when I said, let there be light.

I'm just as much the Lord as when I split the Red Sea and Moses and his followers were led out of Egypt. This is the basic fundamental truth about God.

Unlike the powerless idols, he is the living God. It's interesting, I've given him the beasts of the field to serve him. Now that's an echo, of course, of Genesis 1 when humanity is put in charge of creation, of the created order.

[18 : 05] And Yahweh is saying, look, I've raised up Nebuchadnezzar and he is going to rule over this under me. I'm Lord of the past, he says. I'm Lord of everything there is, everything there was.

But also, verses 6 to 7, he says, I'm the Lord of the present moment. I have given all the, now I have given all these lands into the, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar has been raised up for this time and for this purpose. You see, this is the question the prophets wrestle with. Habakkuk, for example, it's like, a little bit earlier than Jeremiah, wrestles with this problem.

Why has God raised up the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, who are causing such devastation on the earth? And Babylon, says Habakkuk, or rather the Lord says to Habakkuk, and says to and through Jeremiah, is raised up to punish Judah for its idolatry, but later to be judged himself.

Verse 7, all the nations shall serve him, his son and his grandson, until the time, that's the time of judgment, where his own land comes. It was a short-lived empire, something like 70 years.

[19 : 24] Now, 70 years in the lifetime of an individual is a very long time, but in the history of a nation, it isn't all that long. So this is going to be short-lived. But then in verse 11, he says, any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave in its own land to work in it and dwell there, declares the Lord.

It's important to realize what's being said here. Jeremiah is saying the exile is the exile, the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar is my judgment. But, if you will listen, if you will obey him, the city will be spared.

He'll still be under his yoke, he'll still be under his rule, the city will be spared. We'll come back to that in a moment or two. So he is lord of the past, lord of the present, he's also lord of the future.

Look at 28, verse 3. The false prophet Hananiah says, within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord's house. Now, as we'll see next week in chapter 29, the time of the exile is actually going to be 70 years.

It's a, the judgment is real, but it's limited. That's the point. That's why chapter 27, verse 22 is so important. Look at that verse.

[20 : 45] They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there. That's the judgment. That is the bad news, if you like. The good news is until the day when I visit them, declares the Lord, then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.

You see what the true prophet is saying. The true prophet is saying, look, you cannot avoid judgment, but God is, it's not God's last word.

God will bring you back. You see, Jeremiah is teaching great truths about God. Israel's God, Yahweh, the one who was and is and is to come.

He's not been taken by surprise, but very far, very far from being taken by surprise, he's actually brought about this situation. That's what Daniel says in the first, in the first two verses of his book.

The Lord gave Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. So, this great truth is a powerful, powerful message that God is in control, that God is on the throne.

[21 : 55] Now, the second great truth that runs through these passages is that God is totally consistent. God is holy and God is love. Now, remember I said a moment or two ago, God is sovereign, but humans are responsible.

Now, two other truths that must be held in tension is that God is holy and that God is love. And once again, we must never play down one of those truths and pretend that one is more important than the other.

These two truths balance each, balance is probably the wrong word, these two truths complement each other and intertwine with each other. Remember, holy, holy, holy, holy, the Yahweh of hosts says Isaiah, holiness to the power of three, so to speak.

And yet, he is love through and through. And he is, first of all, misrepresented by the false prophets. Notice how often, as I said, it is a lie, it is a lie, it is a lie.

What they're effectively saying is God is not serious about holiness. God actually will just overlook what you've done. And he'll bring back everything and everyone in a couple of years' time.

[23 : 11] We'll all get back to our own cozy ways, but nothing will already happen. See, verse, verse, let me find the verse, verse, yes, verse 19 of chapter 27.

For thus says the Lord of hosts, concerning the pillars, the sea, the sea is a large bronze-shaped vessel which Solomon had made. The stands, all the rest of the vessels are left in this city.

Thus says the Lord, they will be carried to Babylon. You see, holiness for the false prophets rested in objects, in bricks and mortar, in artifacts, and so on.

Although, you see, it's always easier to arouse people's enthusiasm for buildings and artifacts than it is for holy living. Very easy to get people interested in holy objects.

Well, it's very difficult to get people fascinated and excited by holy living. At heart, this is a denial of the great truth of Psalm 24. The earth is the Lord's and everything that fills it.

[24 : 22] Not just particular bricks and mortar, not just particular places, but the earth is the Lord's. And, sometimes people become so wedded to holy objects, to ways of doing things, that they become as important as the gospel and then more important than the gospel.

These prophets they send you saying, God is not holy. God is love in a sentimental kind of way. What he wants is everyone to have a good time and not particularly worry about his holiness.

You see, we've got to remember this so often. It's easy to, isn't one of the great problems about scripture, it's awfully easy to apply scripture to other people, isn't it?

And to ignore, ignore the application to ourselves. Anything that becomes more important than the gospel becomes ultimately a threat to the gospel.

You see, other bodies other than the church can offer coffee and chats and a social calendar, but only God's people have been committed the gospel of grace.

- [25 : 39] That is the one thing that cannot be found anywhere else. And when we become utterly taken up with the artifacts, with the ways of doing things, whether it's additional that we love and hanker after or the trendy that we think will bring the crowds flooding in, then once that happens, then we've lost sight of the holiness of God and of the grace of God.
- God is not a comfort blanket. God is, God makes demands, but it's not the rigid and nasty demands that so often legalism makes.
- God's holiness and God's grace belong together. You see, very often, very often in the past, and indeed more recently, I've listened to sermons that effectively said something like this, God, if you come to the Lord, you've got to give up this, give up that, give up the next thing.
- That may well be true, but what God wants is us. What God wants is you and I. He wants our love. He wants the love of our hearts.
- He wants us to, he wants us to recognize his holiness and his love and his grace. That is the point. It's not a question of, you see there, sometimes, particularly I think in charismatic circles, people think that if something is enjoyable, then God must want it for us.
- [27 : 14] Lord, give me a Mercedes-Benz and that kind of thing. On the other hand, on the, at the far end of the reform spectrum, it's the opposite case, isn't it?
- God, if we want it, God can't possibly want us to have it. After all, it'd be awful if we enjoyed ourselves, wouldn't it? And you see, so often we swing between these two.
- I always think the Methodist Covenant Service gets this right. I meant to bring a coffee, I can't remember the exact words. It's something like this, the Methodist Covenant Service, which says something like this, sometimes we can please Christ and please ourselves.
- At other times, we can only please Christ by denying ourselves. I think that gets it right. It's not a question of whether we're naturally attracted to it or naturally repelled from it.
- It's a question of, Lord, what does the Lord want? Remember what the old carol says? What can I give him? Give my heart. That's what the Lord wants.
- [28 : 22] And if the Lord has our hearts, then his totally consistent love and holiness will keep us in the right way.
- I mean, after all, if you try and follow the Lord following rules and regulations, you're soon going to stumble and fall.
- That's why many people like rules and regulations. They don't have to make any decisions. Everything is covered. Like what I used to say in some Christian groups, everything is forbidden even if it's permitted.
- And that's the kind of tangle some of us get ourselves into. Of course, there's the opposite extreme. Everything is permitted even if it's forbidden. We must do neither.
- C.S. Lewis, whom we expected to hear about, well, here I have to hear about him now, said, the devil sends errors into the world in pairs of opposites so we can spend all our time arguing about which is the worst of the two instead of ignoring both errors and straightforwardly following the Lord as his disciples.
- [29 : 31] So, God is totally consistent. And because he's totally consistent, he will judge, but he will also respond to repentance.
- And what is repentance? Ultimately, repentance is accepting his verdict of judgment now so that we may escape it then. Accepting now that we are guilty sinners who deserve judgment.
- Accepting now that we have no hope when we stand before him in order to escape judgment then. And in Jeremiah's time, that was the, there is a real choice here.

Zedekiah and the people could have repented. Verse 12, to Zedekiah, king of Judah, I spoke in like manner. Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people and live.

Why will you and your people die by sword, by famine, and by pestilence? That's the description of what was going to happen when the city was destroyed. Maybe more would have been deported to Babylon, but the terrible devastation would have been avoided.

[30 : 36] See, back to Romans 2, the kindness, the mercy of God is meant to lead to repentance. And his consistency means that his love and his mercy are his love, his mercy, and his judgment are wholly at one with each other.

Judgment now or judgment then. That's what the gospel is about, isn't it? That's what the word justified means. Justified does not mean, as I used to be taught, just as if I'd never sinned.

That's not good enough. That simply puts me back in Eden with the possibility of everything going wrong. justified means a favorable verdict before the last day.

Already being given the verdict that the judge will pronounce on the last day. Remember Romans 8, whom he justified, not he will glorify, whom he justified, he glorified.

The glorifying is as certain as the justifying. That's the point. So, that brings me to my third point. God is rich in mercy. I want to emphasize this because the heart of Jeremiah's message is a message of grace.

[31 : 49] I gave the title of this whole series, The Prophet of the Costly New Covenant. A little while we'll come to the New Covenant, which is, Jeremiah is the prophet of the New Covenant.

And I want to say two things about this. How do we know that God is gracious to the people of that time? How do we know that God is gracious to us now?

God is gracious because he has sent them Jeremiah to warn them of judgment. When a prophet comes preaching judgment, that is a sign of God's grace. The prophet warns to flee from the wrath to come.

That is a sign that God is rich in mercy. You see, look at chapter 28 now. In the same year, beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, Hananiah, the prophet, spoke to me in the house of the Lord.

The fact that he's called the prophet rather suggests that he has almost got a kind of official status and is recognized as such. He's an establishment prophet. And he has a message from which judgment is absent or any serious judgment is absent.

[32 : 58] Verse 3, within two years, I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord's house which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took away and carried to Babylon. And verse 4, I will also bring back Jehoiachin or Jeconiah and all the exiles from Judah.

Totally, totally absent from this is any sense of judgment. This is just a little interruption. And he symbolized this by snatching the wooden yoke from Jeremiah's neck and breaking it.

But the iron yoke of exile is unbreakable. You see, verse 4 illustrates the kind of hopes that were growing in some people's hearts.

The king will come back from exile. Everything will be well again. Rather as some of the Jacobite families in the 18th century used to drink a toast to the king and pass their wine glasses over the water carafe.

The king crossed the water believing Bonnie Prince Charlie would come back and everything would be well. So what's happening here? And here's how Jeremiah responds. You see, Jeremiah, verse 6, said, Amen.

[34 : 16] May the Lord do so. May the Lord make the words that you have prophesied come true and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord and all the exiles. If Jeremiah were the gloomy judgmental figure that people often accuse him of being who would not have said this.

In fact, what Jeremiah, Jeremiah is essentially saying, Hananiah, that will happen and I want to see it happening. But it's not going to happen anytime soon.

It's not going to happen in two years. It's not going to happen without judgment. And very interestingly, in verse 10, sorry, verse 11, Jeremiah the prophet went his way.

He doesn't do any counter-slashing. He doesn't do any, he doesn't argue with Hananiah. Indeed, he waits until the Lord gives him something to say. Verse 13, Go and tell Hananiah, thus says the Lord.

Now, the Lord who is rich in mercy sends a prophet to say judgment is coming. But if you repent, you will live.

[35 : 24] And God allows time to repent. In 28, verse 1, Hananiah makes his false prophecy in the fifth month of the fourth year.

At the end of the chapter, verse 17, in the same year, in the seventh month, God gives Hananiah the prophet two months to respond to the words of Jeremiah.

Because judgment here has an inbuilt repentance clause, if you like. Remember, that's illustrated very well in Jonah. Jonah says, 40 days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.

Now, that doesn't mean Jeremiah was a false prophet. Nineveh repented and God spared Nineveh. It was to be destroyed later, of course, because it returned to its old bad ways.

We were about that, particularly in the prophet Nahum. Hananiah had two months to repent. And this still remains true. As long as the gospel word is being proclaimed, as long as people are warned to flee from the wrath to come, there is still hope.

[36 : 35] And we really need to nail this lie that people who preach judgment are gloomy, unpleasant people. Well, some of them may be. I mean, that doesn't alter the message. But the point is, it's, if your house were on the fire and somebody knew that and didn't warn you, that would not be a friend of yours.

That would be somebody who didn't care for you or for anything about you. So, God is rich in mercy. So, you see, I think all these chapters are telling us are enormously important truths about God.

God rules everything. He is still on the throne and he will continue to rule everything to all eternity. He's totally consistent. He is not holiness at the expense of love or love at the expense of holiness.

And he is rich in mercy. God who is rich in mercy. That is the message of Jeremiah. And this is the message of the gospel. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, how we praise you indeed for the riches of your mercy, the riches of your grace. How we praise you that all through the long centuries and all through all the years to come that you are faithful, that you are totally consistent.

[37 : 56] You indeed are the Lord of the years, all the past years, the present years, the years that are to come. And help us indeed to reflect in our living and in our speaking that truth so that your name will be glorified and people will be brought into your kingdom.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.