

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

August 30,2020

Old Testament Reading; Jeremiah 15: 15-21

Responsive Reading; Psalm 26: 1-8

Epistle Reading; Romans 12: 9-21

Gospel Reading; Matthew 16: 21-28

Sermon Title: **Setting the Standard**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Jesus tells his disciples what He will go through for man and Paul tells man what we should do for Jesus.

We come to church to praise God, hear the Word of God, have the Word interpreted for us and then we end up thanking God for the Word and commit to living that Word. OK, great. The only job the preacher has is to interpret the word. Now comes the problem. What does the preacher do if the Word is so beautifully written that interpretation seems redundant?

That is where we are at today.

So, I guess that my presermon prayer would be as follows; Dear Lord, may the words of your mouth and the meditations of our

hearts be acceptable as we review those truths. Hallelujah and Amen.

In the gospel reading Peter has just said that Jesus is the Christ and the son of the living God. Jesus replies that this truth was given by God to Peter because no man could have taught him that because no man believed that it was so, yet. This said Jesus goes on to say, “Now that you know who I am, let me tell you what will happen next. We’re going to Jerusalem where I will be handed over to the officials, beaten, killed and will rise from the dead on the third day.”

Of course, Peter reacts and Jesus rebukes him for saying what Satan would have said to thwart God’s plan to save the world. Jesus then goes on to say that if His followers would really follow Him, they would have to be willing to give more to the project than just lip service. They should be willing to take up their cross and follow him.

Not every follower of Jesus would die for their devotion to Jesus so we move on to the words of Paul. If we were not all going to die for Jesus what would be expected of us?

Paul goes on to outline our responsibilities much like Jesus had done on the Sermon on the Mount. Let me paraphrase that Epistle lesson. Love without hypocrisy, hate evil, cling to good, be kind to each other like we were all family, be diligent and fervent in spirit, and serve God.

Also, rejoice in hope, be patient in trouble, and keep praying. While you're at it, be charitable and hospitable to those who are in need.

Now here is a shot straight from the Mount; Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Next;

Rejoice with those that rejoice and weep with those that weep. Get it together with other saints and be humble. Repay no-one evil for evil. Hey! I heard that one someplace before.

The next line is aimed straight at the year 2020; If it is possible, AS MUCH AS DEPENDS ON YOU, live peaceably with all men. It is not always going to work but give it a try. Don't try to get revenge, leave that to God.

The next line tickles my "my bad". There is an explanation of this but I like it just as it is.

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

Lastly, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Great sermon Paul but you left us in the dark in one area. What if we are praying and God seems to be ignoring us and letting us suffer?

For that answer we go back to Jeremiah. Jeremiah says that if we do not seem to be getting help from God maybe we are not praying from the right place. Maybe it is our fault and not His negligence.

After Jeremiah says, “Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed?”

The Lord answers; Thus, says the Lord:

If you return, then I will bring you back; You shall stand before Me; If you take out the precious from the vile, [that is clean up your motives], You shall be as My mouth, Let them [the bad guys] return to you, But you must not return to them...I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked, And I will redeem you from the grip of the terrible.”

There you have it. If Jesus was willing to live for us for thirty-three years and then die and rise for us then we should be willing to live for Him until we get the privilege to die to Him.

So, I say thank you Jesus for letting us know what was going to happen to you, and thank you Jeremiah and Paul for the road map that God wants us to follow. Thank you, Jeremiah, Paul and Jesus, for this sermon and bless this review that I have delivered at this time and place. And now with all my heart I conclude with these words of praise.

Hallelujah and Amen!

