

**“Remembering My Name”**

Jeremiah 31: 31-34, Psalm 116:1-9

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In Sunday school, some children had some problems repeating the Lord’s Prayer. One child prayed, “Our Father, who art in heaven, how’d you know my name?”

It is true that God knows our name. Not only does he know our name, but he also knows our every thought. There is a song I like, especially, the words: “I have a maker he formed my heart, before even time began My life was in his hands He knows my name He knows my every thought, He sees each tear that falls and hears me when I call.” Our God is caring, loving and friendly. He listens, encourages and understands us. In our human history, even now, the name of God has been misused so many times by man and political power elites, to justify their greed and egoistical purposes. What we believe about God is that he doesn’t judge us or punish us but accepts and embraces us as we are.

Today’s Scripture reading reminds us that God will not remember our past faults and mistakes. Instead, he wants us to renew our covenant and relationship with Him. In our Scripture reading this morning from Jeremiah, the role of the prophet was a messenger who delivered God’s heart to his people as a ‘wake up call of souls.’ In our first reading, the prophet Jeremiah was an active prophet who worked around 626 BC during the reign of good King Josiah in Judah (the Southern Kingdom). Jeremiah is commonly known as the “weeping prophet.” He might have wept for the slaying of his own people when the southern Kingdom of Judah was destroyed. Let me share a little background of Israel’s history with you.

In approximately 930 B.C., the United Monarchy, which ruled over all the tribes of Israel, was divided into two kingdoms (after King David and his son, Solomon): Israel in the north, led by Jeroboam son of Nebat, and Judea in the South, led by Rehoboam the son of Solomon. The two kingdoms differed in cultural and religious aspects. The Judean faith’s main place of worship was in the Jerusalem temple, while Jeroboam established temples in Bethel and Dan in which he placed golden calves. The Book of Kings presents us with the history of the two kingdoms, always separate and distinct. The Israelite’s kingdom was destroyed by Assyria, in 722 B.C. The Judean kingdom was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Jeremiah described Judah as the unfaithful son or God's bride. The Israelites worshipped foreign fertility gods. People repeatedly broke the covenant with God, and the nations' life was corrupted by idolatry, injustice, and falsehoods. Jeremiah urged his people and leaders to repent and turn to abandon their unjust, wrong ways and to return in faithfulness to their covenant with God, but the people refused to believe him because they thought that they would always be safe and their temple in Jerusalem would be safe as well. Jeremiah saw the fall of Jerusalem and his people become captives in exile. Imagine his broken heart. Imagine him weeping day and night - weeping for his slain people who forgot their God and lost their country. The Bible says that his head is a spring of water and his eyes are a 'fountain of tears.' This is the reason why Jeremiah was called the "weeping Prophet."

The whole book of Jeremiah describes God's discomfort and disappointment with the Israelites. Even though his people broke the covenant with God, he never left them nor abandoned them. In our reading, God promised renewed covenant through the prophet Jeremiah. This chapter is also known as the "Little book of comfort" in the book of Jeremiah because this chapter talks about God's new promise and hope for his people. God said to Jeremiah, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people." Our God is endlessly patient. He graciously cares and forgives our inequities and sins and grants his pardon. This is our God. Do you see God's desperate heart for you in the tears of Jeremiah's eyes?

Let me share another story which describes our relationship with God. During the Korean War between the years of 1950 to 1953, over one million people including U.S soldiers lost their lives in combat. Many orphans, widows and refugees came out of this war, especially in winter time. On a very cold day in winter, American troops were crossing a bridge for their mission. People heard a baby crying from under the bridge. A soldier came down to the bridge and found a baby wrapped in clothes, and a lady holding the baby was found naked and frozen to death. The baby was rescued immediately. People assumed that this woman took off her clothes for the sake of saving her baby, but she could not save herself. Later on, this baby was adopted by an American family and raised well in United States. He received good care and many blessings from his adopted parents. He grew up and went to college. At 19, he told his parents that he wanted to visit South Korea, his mother country where he was born and found. It was a surprise to them, but his parents were happy to allow him to visit his mother country. They were willing to come to Korea with him. As soon as he arrived in Korea, the first place that he went was the place where he was found under the bridge. Ironically, it was a cold winter, too. This young

man stood on the spot where his biological mother died for him. For a while, he closed his eyes. A warm tear ran down his cheek. He began to cry. He started to take off all his clothes and covered the ground with the clothes. He was naked. He gently said, "I thought of you all the time. Thank you so much. Now I want to make you warm." During his nineteen years, the young man never forgot his biological mother. No one urged him to visit Korea and look for his biological parents. He surely thought of his mother and was deeply impacted by her sacrifice. It was not a generous helping hand, but a life giving act for his life.

This is our God's heart for you and me. We believe our God never forgets us nor never abandons us even though we sometimes forsake God or turn away from Him because our heart changes. He wants to protect us and save us even by sacrificing his precious life. This is the heart of God for his people. In Isaiah 49:14-17, the Israelites say, "The Lord has forsaken us, our Lord has forgotten us." But God answers, "<sup>15</sup>Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Though she may forget, yet I will not forget you. <sup>16</sup>See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands." This is our God that we want to encounter. Jeremiah's God reminds us how important we are to God.

We have been on a journey together discovering this intimate relationship with God. I pray that you can encounter God during this special season of Lent, Amen.