THE STORY CHAPTER 17

The Kingdoms’ Fall

February 4-5, 2017

Appearing on the Big Screen…

**15**The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. **16**But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

*Pg. 241; 2 Chronicles 36:15-16*

**We are never without hope because God is never without a plan.**

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

*Jeremiah 29:11*

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.

*Jeremiah 29:10*

**What you love will change the way you live, but how you live will never change the way you’re loved.**

“The word of the lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

*Pg. 237; Jeremiah 1:4-5*

“I have put my words in your mouth.”

*Pg. 238; Jeremiah 1:9*

21 Yet this I call to mind

and therefore I have hope:

22 Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,

for his compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning;

great is your faithfulness.

*Pg. 244; Lamentations 3:21-23*

**God is completely just and completely merciful.**

“Has a nation ever changed its gods?

     (Yet they are not gods at all.)

But my people have exchanged their glorious God

     for worthless idols.

Be appalled at this, you heavens,

     and shudder with great horror,” declares the Lord.

“My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken me, the spring of living water,

and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

*Pg. 238; Jeremiah 2:11-13*

**13**Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14**but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

**15**The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

*John 4:13-15*

**You are deeply loved by the only one who can satisfy your deepest desires.**

THE STORY CHAPTER 17

The Kingdoms’ Fall

Travis Eades, Campus Pastor

Oak Hills Church

February 4-5, 2017

**To view The Story Chapter 17 sermon video by Travis Eades,** [**CLICK HERE**](http://media.oakhillschurch.com/default.aspx?page=3679&item=569)**.**

**Introduction**

Three friends decided to go deer hunting together: a lawyer, a doctor, and a preacher. As they were walking, along came a big buck. All three of them shot at exactly the same time. Immediately the buck dropped to the ground and they all rushed up to see how big it actually was. The only problem was that they couldn't determine whose shot had actually killed the deer.

As a heated debate ensued, a few minutes later a game officer came by and asked what the problem was. The doctor told him that they were debating who shot the buck. The officer took a look at the buck and within a few seconds, he said with much confidence, "The preacher shot the buck!" They all wondered how he knew that so quickly. The officer said, "Easy. The bullet went in one ear and out the other."

Now that’s just harsh. My son actually told me that one this last week. Not sure what he’s trying to tell me.

But let’s face it. Preachers have a tough gig. Get out there they said. Say something meaningful they said. Oh, and you need to do it in 25 minutes. No pressure, right?

You don’t have to be a preacher to know that feeling. Some of you are teachers, coaches. Some of you are parents and you’ve had a child for not 25 minutes but 25 years and you’d like to think some of your words had some staying power.

Today I want to introduce you to a preacher, a prophet, who had a pretty tough assignment. He was called to be God’s mouthpiece at a time when Israel was falling to pieces. And the worst part is that God called him to preach and told him every word you speak will go in one ear and out the other. No wonder he was called the weeping prophet.

His name was Jeremiah. We find him in the 17th chapter of *The Story*. For those that are new, *The Story* is a resource we’ve been using to help us go through the entire Bible chronologically. And it’s especially helpful in the part of the Bible we’ll be in today where sometimes timelines can jump around from book to book. And there’s no way we can cover it all so I hope you’ve been reading throughout the week.

In fact, let’s just celebrate those of you who read your chapter this week.

*Applause*

Some of you are like, “I didn’t read, did you?” “No. Just keep clapping and smiling.” That’s alright. Elders are taking some notes. They’ll be making visits this afternoon. Totally kidding. They’ll all be watching the Superbowl!

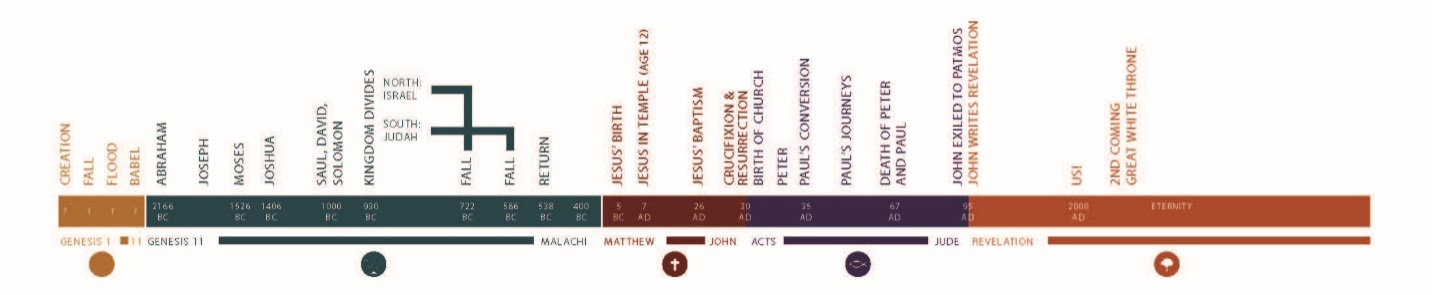
If this is your first time to Oak Hills, we’re so glad you’re here and for all of you watching online. If you don’t have a *Story* book, you can follow along in your Bible. If you don’t have either, no worries, we’ll also have the Scriptures on the screen. Let’s pray and we’ll dive into chapter 17.

*Prayer*

**The Story so far…**

Here’s a quick recap of how we got to this point:

*Refer* *to Timeline poster.*

**

God created man but man rejected God’s vision. God makes a promise to Abraham that his descendants will be like stars in the sky-too many to count. And when God makes a promise, he keeps that promise. He does this by birthing the nation of Israel.

Through this nation, God is revealing himself not only to Israel but to all the nations. It’s all part of his plan to bring Jesus into the world and salvation for all. For a time, the nation is unified and strong but as power is passed down, God’s ways are not. Kings are evil and the kingdom becomes divided and so does the allegiance of this once strong nation until we find these words in II Chronicles 36:15-16, also found on page 241 of *The Story* book:

**15**The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. **16**But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

*Pg. 241; 2 Chronicles 36:15-16*

No remedy. Really? Not exactly what you want to hear from your mechanic much less the God of the universe.

But just because there’s no remedy, doesn’t mean there’s no plan. Here’s our bottom line today,

**We are never without hope because God is never without a plan.**

Say that with me, “we are never without hope because God is never without a plan.”

Perhaps you’ve heard this Scripture from Jeremiah 29:11, one of the most well-known Scriptures:

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

*Jeremiah 29:11*

Keep in mind, before this was on a graduation card, God is speaking directly to his people. Now at first glance I’m thinking this plan sounds really good. We know we’re never without hope because you’re never without a plan. So God, what’s the plan? Lay it on us.

Notice the verse right before it:

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.

*Jeremiah 29:10*

Oh the 70-year plan? Pain, suffering, destruction. Um, God, I was thinking more the – wait for it – the 70-minute plan! It’s like more than an hour so I can still sweat it out a bit. See, here’s the thing, I’d love to know whether that person is the one. Am I supposed to move? Take that job? Rent? Buy?

Who would rather go with the 70-minute plan? Yeah, me too.

We don’t always understand God’s timing but we’re never without hope because God is never without a plan.

You see here’s what God knew about Israel and it’s what he knows about you and me:

**What you love will change the way you live, but how you live will never change the way you’re loved.**

The Israelites forgot their first love. They had done much evil in the eyes of the Lord. As the great Texas philosopher Johnny Lee said, they were “looking for love in all the wrong places.”

But though the people had forgotten God, he had not forgotten them. How they lived would not change the way they’re loved and God wanted them back. Did you notice that in Jeremiah 29, he says to them, “I will fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.” He’s not some angry God working on payback. He is working on the way back. Their way back to him.

This is where we’re introduced to Jeremiah with these words. On page 237 or Jeremiah chapter 1: 4-5.

“The word of the lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

*Pg. 237; Jeremiah 1:4-5*

Jeremiah’s assignment was to preach to the people although they weren’t going to listen. His response was, I do not know how to speak; I am too young. It was a tough first preaching gig. I would’ve wanted out too.

But God assures him on page 238 or Jeremiah 1:9, God says,

“I have put my words in your mouth.”

*Pg. 238; Jeremiah 1:9*

So there stands Jeremiah in Jerusalem. He is left behind to declare, “You’re not without hope. God is not without a plan. He will bring back his people.” It was a tough assignment but one with which Jeremiah was faithful.

Just like you and I, sometimes Jeremiah would have to remind himself of this hope as we see in the book of Lamentations chapter 3:21-23 also on the bottom of page 244:

21 Yet this I call to mind

and therefore I have hope:

22 Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,

for his compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning;

great is your faithfulness.

*Pg. 244; Lamentations 3:21-23*

Isn’t that a beautiful picture and yet hard to take in? God is just and righteous yet fully compassionate. Sometimes I hear the question, “Is God the God of wrath of the Old Testament or the God of mercy in the New Testament?” The answer of course is, “yes.” That’s the beauty of looking at the entirety of God’s story and the fullness of his nature,

**God is completely just and completely merciful.**

See for me, I can’t be both. For me to be one, it comes at the expense of the other. In my family, I’m more the justice guy. You know, a sense that there is right and there is wrong. And there are consequences. There’s just a certain way things should be. Do I have any justice types in the house? I see some of you are trying to raise someone else’s hand.

Now some of you lean a little more towards mercy and compassion. Praise the Lord. You are much more inclined to give a second chance. In our family, that’s Alisha. I tell my kids all the time, be so thankful for your mother.

We get ready to go somewhere, I tell all the kids that the car will be pulling out at 8:30. I don’t mean 8:31. I don’t care if you haven’t fixed your hair.

8:30 comes and goes. No kids. So what do I do? Being the sensitive man I am, I’m pulling away with kids doing an Indiana Jones slide and roll underneath the closing garage door and chasing the van down the street. Why? Because I said everyone needs to be in the van to leave at 8:30.

Now I have a choice. I can either keep driving or I can listen to my compassionate wife who says, “Honey, maybe we should stop the van so they don’t have to dive into a moving vehicle.”

Men this is free, but your wife has the gift of mercy, go with her gift, especially if she’s the one chasing the van.

You see God is completely both just and merciful and here’s how: Jesus took on our sin and gave us his righteousness. The full wrath of God was poured out on Jesus so that the full mercy of God could be poured out on us.

Can I ask you a question? Have you accepted this mercy? Have you accepted his plan for you? Or are you trying to find hope in your own plan?

Look at bottom of page 238 in *The Story*, or Jeremiah 2:11-13:

“Has a nation ever changed its gods?

     (Yet they are not gods at all.)

But my people have exchanged their glorious God

     for worthless idols.

Be appalled at this, you heavens,

     and shudder with great horror,” declares the Lord.

“My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken me, the spring of living water,

and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

*Pg. 238; Jeremiah 2:11-13*

I have the sense that some within the sound of my voice are exhausted. Worn out from digging your own cisterns? Love, career, money, pleasure, shopping, eating. Did I go there? Oh yes I did. Even good things can become modern day idolatry if it displaces God from the throne of our lives. Family, our children. Good things can become a mirage of God things. The problem with the cisterns we dig ourselves is that we have to keep filling them because they simply don’t hold water. We get our fix but it just leads to the next and it never satisfies. It can be exhausting but it’s the best this world has to offer you.

In John 4, Jesus meets a lady who has dug her own cisterns as she had burned through relationship after relationship. He meets her, out of all places, he meets her at a well and offers her something better…peace. He says something like what Jeremiah said:

**13**Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14**but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

**15**The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

*John 4:13-15*

Maybe you’ve tried all the best water this world has to offer, but have come up thirsty and unsatisfied. Jesus offers water from the well that never runs dry.

**You are deeply loved by the only one who can satisfy your deepest desires.**

I’ve been listening to a song by Vertical Church that has become my prayer this week. Could I encourage you to pray this prayer, this week: If I have you and nothing else, I have everything.

*Song lyrics are included here, but the song was not sung or quoted during this sermon.*

**If I Have You**

*© 2015 by Vertical Church Band, from Church Songs Album*

I don't need the riches of this world

I can't even take them where I'm going

I don't need a thousand empty words

I just need the ones that You have spoken

If I have You and nothing else, I have everything

If I have You and nothing else

If I have You and nothing else, I have everything

If I have You and nothing else

I don't need to see tomorrow's plans

I just need to trust that You are working

I don't even need to understand

I just need to keep You as the first thing

If I have You and nothing else, I have everything

If I have You and nothing else

If I have You and nothing else, I have everything

If I have You and nothing else

If I have you Jesus, and a lousy job, no job, If I have you Jesus and poor health, If I have you Jesus and I’m lonely, sick, If I have you Jesus and Washington refuses to call me to see what I think, If I have you Jesus and it’s a fight just to get out of bed in the morning, If I have you Jesus and nothing else, I have everything.

You are never without hope because, why? “God is never without a plan”. His plan for your life? His name is Jesus.

Well, I hope that’s been helpful. My 25 minutes are up.

But it’s a truth, you don’t want to go in one ear and out the other.

*PRAYER*