

“Judgment” sermon for October 8, 2017

Jeremiah 15:15-21, Romans 12:16-21, Matthew 21:38-46

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 Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see.’ your guilt remains (John 9:39, 41).”

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In 1865 on the 19th of June, Union soldiers under the command of Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with the news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. Of course, Abraham Lincoln had decreed their freedom in January of 1863, but as the war went on the slaves of Texas remained unfree. Actually, the war had ended two weeks earlier, but Texas planters decided that it would be best to delay informing the slaves until the harvest was picked. We are God’s generals, sent to give the world God’s judgment, that its enslavement to sin and death, war and violence, hate and fear are over. We are sent to proclaim the decree that we have been united with God through Christ and hence united as a human family.

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In 1945 Shoichi Yokoi, a Japanese soldier found a leaflet saying that the war was over, but did not believe it. He hid himself on the island of Guam, living in stress until January 24, 1972, 27 years after

the end of World War II. Hunters found him and told him, “We are at peace.” We are the hunters who are to tell the world that “the war is over.” We have been reconciled to God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We now have peace with God and peace with each other.

In 1695 this anonymous poem was written entitled “Alleluia!” It is a word of judgment:

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia—
The strife is o’er, the battle done;
Now is the victor’s triumph won;
Now be the song of praise begun, Alleluia.

Death’s mightiest powers have done their worst,
And Jesus hath his foes dispersed;
Let shouts of praise and joy outburst, Alleluia.
When General Granger announced to the slaves of Texas that they were now free it was a judgment, a decree from the Government of the United States of America that slavery had been no more for two and a half years. When the hunters on the island of Guam discovered the Japanese soldier, and

declared “peace” to him, they were giving a word of judgment that had been decided 27 years earlier.

When the Apostle Paul quoted from Jesus’ sermon on the Mount regarding the way we should treat those who oppose us, it was a word of judgment, a decree of a new behavior for God’s kingdom:

19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: ***If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***

Likewise, when Jesus declared to the Jews who questioned his loving, all-embracing outreach to corrupt politicians, addicts, thieves and prostitutes, he pronounced a word of judgment:

43 ***“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.”***

Judgment should not be understood as condemnation. When God tells us to judge rightly, he is not talking about criticizing and condemning.

For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:17).

To judge is to express a judicial opinion, the decree of the judge. Judgment for the world is the result of what Christ has done and is what we are to give:

I came to decree God's verdict for human beings; to show you your promise and potential. My coming into the world has this effect, all can be transformed and delivered from that which plagues us.

John 3:18-19

There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. And this decree is based on this: God's light came into the world, but people loved darkness rather than light, because they were so used to practicing evil.

We have the work of judgment to do. So many people need to hear God's judgment, God's decree that they are free. So many people need to know that they can be free from fear. So many need to know that God has freed us from our faults, our weaknesses, our failures, our past and has achieved peace for us and with him through Jesus Christ. Amen.