

**January 13, 2020**

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Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, January 13, 2021! Thank you so much for tuning in, and for taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

Today I'm going to dive into that last word of my usual greeting - faith. What does it mean for us to be faithful? And what does God's faithfulness mean for us? I could certainly talk about both of these things for quite a while, but I hope the few pieces we discuss today will help strengthen your outlook on what faith can really look like in your life, and in the midst of God's creation.

Our scripture, or Word, for today is from Jeremiah 7:

*But this command I gave them, "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you." Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but, in the stubbornness of their evil will, they walked in their own counsels, and looked backward rather than forward. From the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day; yet they did not listen to me, or pay attention, but they stiffened their necks. They did worse than their ancestors did.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

So Jeremiah is a prophet, a person who brings the words of God to the people, and in this passage, he is affirming God's promises that God made to the people Israel as they were led out of slavery in Egypt. God says, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people." In this covenant, this deep and enduring promise, God claims God's beloved people as God's own and promises, us, the people, that God will be with us. God will be our God, and in that we have sure and everlasting hope. Our faith is indeed rooted in this promise of God, that God will always be with us, God's chosen people.

And God lived out that promise to be with us in the birth and life and new life of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, who we know from Advent and Christmas stories, is God with us. God understands what it is to be human through Jesus Christ, and God is faithful to us in human life and death and beyond. In Jesus' death and resurrection God defeated the power of sin and death for us, ensuring us that we have life eternal through Him, and that we are not captive to the sin that threatens to separate us from God's love. God is faithful to God's promise to be our God even in death and beyond - God will never give up on us, God's beloved people.

Our faith is rooted in God's faithfulness to God's promises - that while life can be unsure sometimes, and can go in directions and places we never wanted or anticipated, God is still with us in the midst of it and indeed works in our circumstances to come alongside us, by the power of the Holy Spirit. We take comfort in God's faithfulness. Sometimes it seems like God isn't present when things get really bleak or painful or hard, and it's important to feel through those moments - as humans, life is not perfect and indeed can bring plenty of pain and challenges.

But God doesn't abandon us in that pain or challenge. God gives us hope because God will never give up on the promise to be faithful to us. Our hope is not in what our ideal or best life could be - our hope in the new life and eternal life promised to us in Jesus Christ, given by God our very creator. New and eternal life don't always fit into human perfection standards, and sometimes that's a gift. Through all of that reconciling though, God is certainly faithful and with us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So what can we learn about our own faithfulness in all of this? I am convinced that our curiosity is one of the most faithful ways we can be in the world God made and indeed live out our faith in the living, loving, life-saving God. In today's scripture reading, Jeremiah brings the word from God that God noticed Israel not listening or paying attention to him, even though he sent word through the prophets for a very long time. God is not exactly happy about God's chosen people not listening or paying attention to his work in the world, and this is the lesson we can take about our faithfulness. See, God will never give up on being faithful to us. And our response in faithfulness is simply to listen, to pay attention to the ways God works in our world. No, God's work may not always be what we think it should be, or what specific outcomes we may or may not pray for, or even in the people we expect God to work through. But our faith can be deeply strengthened by simply paying attention, by listening, by being curious about the world God made and continues to choose again and again. These faithful actions of paying attention, listening, and being curious open up new parts of the world for us and help us to grow our faith that the world God made, and indeed God himself, is very good. Let's be open to newness of life that comes forth in that paying attention, open to truly listening to the people and world around us. For we are all people loved and chosen by God, and for that faith of God and our faithful living into God's creation, we can give unending thanks.

Please join me in a word of prayer:

*God our creator and sustainer, we come to you with gratitude for your faithful promises to your people.*

*For the ways you show up in our world and create new life every day, we give you thanks.*

*For the gift of your son Jesus, we give you thanks.*

*Help us to pay attention to your work in the world, and take comfort in your loving faithfulness, wherever our lives lead and wherever we find you in this created world.*

*Help us to pray and keep our faith alive even when things seem to be dying around us.*

*For from those dying places you alone bring new life, dear God, and for that faithfulness to us, your beloved people, we give you thanks and praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Go in peace and faith, dear friends, and have a beautiful day. Amen.