

## **Cherished-Chosen-Challenged – September 12, 2010**

### **The Picture Prophet**

**“Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself. *During* the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat it. And your food which you eat *shall be* by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time you shall eat it. You shall also drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin; from time to time you shall drink. And you shall eat it as barley cakes; and bake it using fuel of human waste in their sight.” Then the LORD said, “So shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, where I will drive them.” So I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Indeed I have never defiled myself from my youth till now; I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has abominable flesh ever come into my mouth.” Then He said to me, “See, I am giving you cow dung instead of human waste, and you shall prepare your bread over it.” Moreover He said to me, “Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread, that they may lack bread and water, and be dismayed with one another, and waste away because of their iniquity.**

**Ezekiel 4:9-17**

God is sending a message to His people in a very unique manner. He had often sent men to speak with His people and communicate His commands and promises. Now, God has asked the prophet Ezekiel to demonstrate the displeasure of His judgment as a sign of the things that are coming to them in the near future.

It is a less than appetizing picture. Bread cooked over human waste...that brings a word of protest from Ezekiel. God accepts the prayer of his servant and gives a new order...cook the bread on animal dung instead. God would not be swayed. He was going to show His people what their failure to love and obey Him was going to bring. The Gentiles

would come. They would lay siege to Jerusalem and bring the people of God into captivity. God's people would live in horrific conditions. Bread and water would be sparse and they would eat and drink daily rations in order to survive. No longer would they receive the abundance of God's good favor, but merely in the most horrible of conditions they would squeak by with a meager existence. This was the prophecy that was to be portrayed to God's people by Ezekiel as his actions at God's command painted a picture of what was coming for them.

Paul enlightened the believers at Corinth about the sacred history recorded in the Old Testament. He reminded that these things were to serve as warnings so believers would not fall into the same trap. Sometimes we think that Christians today believe that God won't take anything away from us or cause us to suffer hard times. If God brought these afflictions to bear on His people in Old Testament times, surely we cannot consider ourselves to be immune. God communicates His grace and mercy to us in Word and Sacrament. We receive these blessings as we gather together in worship on the Lord's Day. It is sad to say that on any given Sunday more than 50% of our congregation cannot be found here at the Lord's house. If we spurn His favor in the gift of Word and Sacrament will He not take away from us the blessings we have enjoyed? He has done it to His people before....He can do it again.

Let us learn from the "Picture Prophet" Ezekiel. God is a gracious and merciful Lord, but He will not abide the idolatry of His people. When the things around us become more important to us than He is we rightly risk His wrath and judgment. Could it be that the difficulties we face as a congregation are directly related to our apathy concerning worship, faith, and love? It is a fair question to ask. Let us repent and cling to Christ our Savior and abide in His love and mercy both now and forever.

- Remember: God takes great pleasure in being merciful to His people. Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and humble adoration for His gracious gifts to us.

- Remember: We can be “Ezekiel” to the nation around us warning of God’s wrath against sin and calling people to share in the forgiveness we have found in Christ Jesus. God does work all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose....even when that good must be brought out of hardship!

How blessed we are to be the people of God. He has chosen us to be in this place. He has prepared us for this time. He has equipped us for service to Him. **Don’t wait for someone else to do it. If you wait on someone else to do it...it will never get done!** God bless you in the growth of your faith and in service to Him and His people, for your labor in the Lord is never in vain.

Pastor Jacobs

**Cherished-Chosen-Challenged 2010**