



## YEAR A - 12TH SUNDAY – JUNE 21, 2020

All good things come to an end. Bad things take a little longer. The first reading today is taken from the book of the prophet Jeremiah in Chapter 20.

Jeremiah was chosen to speak on behalf of God 600 years before Jesus was born. His work covered the span of the last 40 years of the Northern Jewish Kingdom of Judah. That kingdom ended with the Babylonian captivity. The inhabitants who were not tortured and killed, were taken into slavery. Those who died were the lucky ones.

Jeremiah warned them that there would be consequences for turning away from God. They did not believe him. When the priest in charge of the temple at that time heard what Jeremiah was doing, he had him arrested, brutally scourged and put in the stocks over night in the public marketplace.

People said he was crazy for prophesying that Judah would be in trouble. Judah was a powerful nation (like ours) – very prosperous and too strong to be defeated by its enemies. Jeremiah continued with his simple message, “Turn away from God and your nation will be destroyed.” - and as you know, it was. But that can never happen here, - or can it?

Recall the comment of Cardinal George in a speech he gave on the influence of secular humanism in our country today. Secular humanists teach that God did not create us; we created God. They claim that Science can now explain everything. We no longer need God.

The Cardinal said on that occasion, “I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in jail, and his successor will die a martyr in the marketplace.” But that can’t happen here - or can it?

If you listen carefully, you can hear the echo of Jeremiah’s words in our own time, “Turn away from God and your nation will be destroyed.” The bad news for the people of Judah was that their time ran out. The good news for us is - we still have time. But, as a nation, will we listen? St. Paul reminds us in the second reading to the Romans, that God continues to love us, even if we don’t love Him. But in spite of that unconditional love, there are consequences for the choices we make.

We are free to disobey and ignore God. But we must accept the consequences of what we choose. Is it possible that our nation is headed for our own “Babylonian Captivity”? Only time will tell. Jesus gets the last word today. He says in the Gospel, “Fear no one. Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul.” And then he says, “If you will acknowledge me before others, I will acknowledge you before my Father in heaven.”

The whole quote of Cardinal George is worth noting. He said, “I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square.” What he added may be prophetic. He said, “His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help to rebuild civilization, as the church has done so often in human history.”

You are the church. We are the church. It’s time to renew and rebuild what Jesus gave us. We are the embers in the ashes so to speak. Reflect on how we can fan those embers into a roaring fire once again. The lesson of Judah, 2600 years ago, does not have to be repeated by us.

**Or does it?**