The story of the Bible is the story of God choosing a certain group of people to be in a committed relationship with God. There is nothing that this group of people did that was special or deserving. It was a group of people that God chose to be in a special relationship to.

The Biblical stories are these people telling us what it was like to be in this special relationship with God. We see the times of great excitement and we see the times of darkness. We see the honeymoon experiences like the arrival into the Promised Land and Pentecost and we see the horrifying pictures of slavery in Egypt under Pharaoh and the torture of Jesus on the cross. Mountaintop and desert, we get to hear about it all.

We have these stories of God in relationship with this group of people because it gives us a glimpse into how God operates in God’s relationships with human beings. We read these stories to help us interpret our stories.

We have been studying Jeremiah over the last few weeks. And when you study one biblical character over several weeks it forces you to look into texts and Scriptures that many times we Christians overlook. This text is one that not many people get to hear read on Sunday morning.

As we have been learning over the past few weeks, Jeremiah was a prophet. A better description is “truth teller.” He lived about 600 years before the birth of Christ and he told the people of God living in Jerusalem and in the countryside of Judah that they needed to change their behavior. He told them that they were being greedy and not worshipping properly.

And he told them that they needed to change their behavior. If they did not change their behavior then God would allow an outside empire, the Babylonians under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar to conquer them. Babylon was headquartered in what would be modern day Bagdad, Iraq. At the time of this reading from chapter 38, Jeremiah has given up the belief that they will change their behavior. Here is what happens next.

**Read Jeremiah 38: 1-3 (Jeremiah says they will be conquered)**

**Read Jeremiah 38:4 (The king’s officials tell the king that Jeremiah is not being patriotic. He is not saying that God is blessing their country’s actions. He is saying that the country will fail.)**

Let me remind all of us this that Jeremiah is talking about the Jewish people who inhabit Jerusalem. Jerusalem. These are God’s people. The Bible clearly says that this group of people was chosen by God to be God’s people. God blessed them from the beginning. We read earlier from Exodus of how God led this people to defeat the Egyptian pharaoh. God raised up David and then Solomon to be their king.

This is a group of people with a long and verified history that they are the people of God. And so they lift up their swords to go into battle and all of the king’s men say that it is time for the nation to come together and support their effort and shout God Bless Jerusalem. But Jeremiah doesn’t say God bless Jerusalem. Jeremiah doesn’t go along with the nationalistic crowd.

**Read Jeremiah 38:5-13**

We see how really weak King Zedekiah is. He wilts under any pressure. So now he seeks Jeremiah’s advice again and here is what Jeremiah says.

**Read Jeremiah 38:14-28**

And so the final remnant of God’s chosen people, the Israelites, are taken into captivity and Jerusalem is destroyed.

So are we supposed to pray “God bless America” in our country? Sometimes that is a really good thing to pray for. “God Bless America” to be faithful to the will of God on earth. “God Bless America” whenever we lift up those who are downtrodden. “God Bless America” whenever we defend those who are being beaten down including the poor, the widow, and the orphan. “God Bless America” when we are civil with one another rather than trying to tear apart our perceived enemy during political campaigns and over neighborhood squabbles.

But there is also another way to read this passage. When we read of God choosing a certain group of people and being in relationship with them, we can also read this to mean the church. What does it mean to us in the church today that God chose to allow an outside force to conquer God’s people because they would not follow what God was calling upon them to do?

One way to read this is for us today to really question and re-question all that we do and ask ourselves if we are being faithful to what God is calling us to be about as a church. Because if we read Jeremiah correctly, if we are not faithful, God will lift up others who will be faithful.

In a little while, we will hear from one of our elders about some capital improvements that the Session believes that we are called to do as a congregation. Now how can we know if we are being faithful in the list which will be presented today? Are these things we want to fix and replace important? Is a good use of money to replace windows and air conditioners? Is this good and faithful ministry?

That is a question we ask a lot at Session meetings. But as you read in the letter which was sent out this week, this facility is used a lot. And the way this facility is used makes a real impact in our community. There is preschool 4 days a week where kids learn about their abc’s but also that God loves them, there are several church groups that meet here for basketball practice and volleyball games.

There are bluegrass concerts a couple of times a month. The Scouts were here yesterday collecting about 700 pounds of food to be given to those in need in our community. There are community meetings. Out on the field there are soccer and football games. This field and parking lot is covered with vehicles on Saturday mornings.

This community and this church uses this facility a lot during the week to do very important ministry. This community needs a vital and functional building. And it is our responsibility to keep this building maintained and energy efficient.

Jeremiah teaches us that we should never assume that what we do is blessed by God. We should never assume that our actions as a country are what God wants us to do and we should never assume that as a church. As Mr. McGill reminded us, sometimes churches and countries do things which are not God’s will.

So the question you are being asked today is this. Is having a functional, well maintained, energy efficient church facility important to what God wants for this community?

That is a good question which is being placed before us today. AMEN.

-Text: Jeremiah 38

-Given: November 7, 2010 in Allison Creek Pres (York, SC)