

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Des Moines, Iowa

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Luke 14:1, 7-14; Jeremiah 2:4-13

## **“The Power and Wonder of the Past”**

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God is so upset with the people of Israel that he calls a prophet; and, we remember from last week that he calls a *young* prophet. Jeremiah was no more than 12-13 years old when he was called. And, God did that so that no one would think that these words could come out of this prophet’s mouth – he was too young. The words that this young boy was saying had to come from the very word of God; and so, God is angry.

God finds the prophet and the little boy gets up there to speak. What is the first thing that God is going to say to these people? God has been stewing on it for a while. You can tell in the words themselves how angry God is. God is going to share the most frustrating part of what makes him angry with the people of Israel. So the very first words to come out of his mouth are about idolatry; and, he is madder than a hornet at the people who started to turn away from God, and turn toward the false god Baal.

Now, you may have heard it being read before, but the god Baal was a god of fertility, so the first time that the crops didn’t grow well, that there was either too little or too much water, pretty soon those Israelites are saying, “God’s abandoning us. The crops are not growing fast enough. Maybe I should hedge my bet, and maybe go over here and do a few prayers to Baal, the other god. Well, you know, the sheep they are not producing as many babies this year. We had better go over and pray to Baal. Or, my wife and I wanted another child this year and the child didn’t come again. I’d maybe better hedge my bets and go over here to Baal.”

Well, God is a jealous God. He is extraordinarily upset by any form of idolatry. So he tells Jeremiah, “Tell them to stop worshiping anything else but me – that I am a jealous God. Remind them of all of the things I have done for them in the past, so that they remember that Baal has done nothing for them. I have done it all, so that they won’t rely on anything other than me.”

I thought, “that was fine 3,000-4,000 years ago, but what about today? What are those idols, that God might be upset, that we are following today?”

Of course whenever I think of idolatry, I think of Tom Cruise [laughter] and that whole Scientology craziness, but I have already done that route I will skip that one for today.

I picked up a book entitled “Disrupting Witness.” I thought, this was so interesting. It was written by a guy I had never heard of, named Allan Noble. I thought this might be good, and I was so disappointed when I got the book home, and found out that this gentleman was a professor at Oklahoma Baptist University. I thought, “Oh, boy, there are conservatives, and there are people who live in Oklahoma.” [Laughter.] But, you know that once in a while you have to read what the other side says. So, I thought, I will go through here.