

Sermon for 21 September 2025 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Scriptures: Jeremiah 8:18-9:1; Psalm 79: 1-9 (*Insert: Alternate leader and people*); 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13

Sermon: Let's go over our Bible texts for today. First, there's our steady diet of "the weeping prophet," Jeremiah. Why do we think we spend nine weeks on him? Because life is hard, that's why, and nobody expresses that better than this gifted, unwilling, committed man first predicting, and then living through, the collapse of Israel, the destruction of its great temple which they regarded as God's guarantee of their national security, and the signs of injustice and shallow worship that abounded among them before, during, and after their overthrow by powerful neighboring nations. God rubs our nose in the dirt, and if you don't learn that in church, you can't hear the Good News.

Then the Psalm has you chant that aloud, based on the fact that we don't learn something unless we say it again and again, together. That was true before people could read and write, and it's true when we hear the car radio from every open window today ... although thankfully, the psalm-writers and chanters were better composers and truth-tellers than most modern auto drivers and passengers!

Then we learn, again, that our education doesn't just happen one way. We remind ourselves that besides Jesus and the prophets in all the centuries behind us, we have long, practical lives together, week by week and age by age, in what we now call "Church." Listen to what today's lesson teaches about how things worked then, and still do: People reminded each other how to act, and what things were for, and most of all, what love is all about between human beings. Timothy was one of the second generation of Christians who followed through on Jesus and the disciples.

Finally, we have this crazy story about a crooked manager who saves his neck by lying! And what does Jesus say about it? "Do whatever you have to to get into heaven!" I'm kidding, of course; but give me a better description of this parable.

And what does that have to do with today's moment here @ Bethesda United Methodist Church? What did I ask you last week? (*Pause while you remind everybody that I told you last week I wanted us to vote on getting some more people in our Sunday service*).

I can throw the book at you and insist that's what it's come to with us. In bold terms, if we don't start doing that, we're not as smart as that crooked manager Jesus praised.

Do you agree? (Let's hear it ... You don't get out of here without some kind of an answer ...Church includes more than just listening).

Let us pray: Lord,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,Amen.