Hi,

I hope you worshipped on-line with us over the weekend. It was a pretty darn spectacular Palm Sunday service. Weren’t the children adorable -- very clever way to do the processional. Kudos to Kim, Rachel, Kyle, and their teams.

Here are today’s updates:

* My Monday class on Matthew will meet on-line at 3pm on [my Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle). It may be hard to believe but this will be our third on-line class and not our last. You do not need a Facebook account to view the class, but you will need an account to comment. Just follow the link to my page. If you and I are not friends on Facebook, just send me a friend request and we will be.
* Tomorrow’s Genesis class will be at 11:45, also on my Facebook page. We’ll be old hands at this by the time we are going out again.
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org/). This week’s recordings will be up by the end of the day on Wednesday.

On the Monday after Jesus entered Jerusalem, he went to the Temple courtyard and turned over the tables of the moneychangers. Here is that story.

***Jeremiah 7:1–10, 16-19 (NRSV)***

**The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the Lord. 3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. 4 Do not trust in these deceptive words: “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.”**

**5 For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, 6 if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, 7 then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.**

**8 Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, “We are safe!”—only to go on doing all these abominations?**

**16 As for you [Jeremiah], do not pray for this people, do not raise a cry or prayer on their behalf, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you. 17 Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18 The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger. 19 Is it I whom they provoke? says the Lord. Is it not themselves, to their own hurt?**

***Mark 11:15–19 (NRSV)***

**15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 He was teaching and saying, “Is it not written,**

**‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’?**

**But you have made it a den of robbers.”**

**18 And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. 19 And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.**

After his messianic entrance into Jerusalem on Sunday, Jesus heads for the Temple on Monday. On the way to the Temple Mount, Jesus curses a fig tree for not bearing fruit, knowing that the fig tree was a symbol of the Temple. When Jesus arrives at the Temple Mount, he charges in and disrupts the system of buying animals for sacrificial purposes. They key here is to see that Jesus invokes the words and action of Jeremiah, from six centuries before.

*Jeremiah*

About six centuries before Jesus, the prophet Jeremiah makes his way to the Temple gate. There, he stands in front of the massive doors and confronts his fellow Israelites. God’s people have driven themselves over a cliff and now there is no turning back. It is too late; it is a “done deal” (see Jeremiah 4:28 for example). They have passed the point of no return. The “ifs” of Jeremiah 7:5-7 are not about righting the ship or drawing back from the brink, as was the case in other times. Instead, Jeremiah drives home the point that the time of reckoning has come. The “ifs,” the warnings, proved fruitless before and now the poison fruit that the people have grown is about to be their undoing. They have not done justice and now they would reap the consequences. A few decades after Jeremiah’s pronouncement, the Babylonian Empire rolls over Jerusalem, exiles tens of thousands of Jews, and destroys the majestic temple built by Solomon.

Why did this happen? Certainly, the biblical view is that it was God’s judgment, a verdict rendered and carried out. A fair verdict, a just verdict. The people grasped that it was their own sin that was their undoing; yes, they had abandoned God and, yes, they had failed to do justice.

*Jesus*

If we go forward six centuries from Jeremiah, we again find a prophet charging into the Temple pronouncing God’s judgment. But this time the prophet’s name is Jesus. And as with Jeremiah, a few decades after Jesus’ pronouncement, the Roman Empire rolls over Jerusalem, kills hundreds of thousands of Jews, and destroys the majestic temple built by Herod the Great. Seventy years after that, the Romans finish the job, clearing the Jews out of the area and erasing the Roman province of Judea from their geography books.

Many people don’t grasp what it really means when Jesus invokes the words and actions of Jeremiah at the temple in Jerusalem. They forget that when the disciples are gawking at the magnificence of the temple, Jesus tells them that the giant stones were going to be thrown down (Mark 13:1-2; Mt. 24:1-3; Lk 21:5-7). If you visit Jerusalem today, you can see the giant cut stones that were levered off the temple mount by the Romans in 70AD. They still sit on the sidewalks below, right where they fell.

For many people, the Babylonian exile and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans conjures up images of a God who looks for every transgression, great and small, and then smites the offender – judge, jury, and warden all rolled into one. But what does the Bible really say about judgment and punishment? Is it truly God’s retribution, i.e. a smiting?

In a word . . . no. There is, instead, a moral causality in God’s creation, a moral fabric in which actions have consequences, just as they do in the physical world. Sadly, sin is quite real and leads to often horrifying consequences. We see this in our lives all too often. Sometimes we say “what goes around, comes around” or “we reap what we sow.” Abuse others and you’ll find yourself abused. Treat others with kindness and you’ll find that it too boomerangs back to you. These commonplace observations about life get us close to what the Bible teaches about God’s judgment and the “punishment” that ensues.

We, of course, ask where God is as we suffer the consequences of our wrongful actions, as we plunge over the cliff. We sometimes make the mistake of thinking that God promises to insulate us from all the troubles of life, those of our making and those that are not. But this is not God’s promise. However, God does promise us *restoration* after the fall. God does promise that he will never abandon us.

It isn’t that God is always waiting to catch us when we fall; it is truer to say that God is always ready to restore us after the fall. The choices we and others make every day are often destructive and carry terrible consequences. Sometimes those choices are seen in the actions we take; in others, they are seen in our inaction and the blind eye we turn to those we could help. Just as Jeremiah forthrightly tells the people of the destruction and exile that lie ahead, he also brings them messages of hope and restoration. Yes, they are going over the cliff and the crash at the bottom will be terrifying, but God will still be with them and will bring them new life and new hope even in exile. (See Jeremiah 30 for some of these promises.)

*And so we are called still “to let justice roll on like a river,*

 *righteousness like a never-failing stream.” (Amos 5:24)*

*A site to check out*

Jen Wilkin, a Christian speaker and author, is the daughter of our own Stevie and Jim Wilkin. Jen has an ever-growing [website of her own](https://www.jenwilkin.net/) with a number of article and videos available. She is regularly featured in *Christianity Today* magazine.

*A movie recommendation*

Ok . . . another Hitchcock film: *Vertigo*, with James Stewart and Kim Novak. This one is #9 on the American Film Institute’s list of the top 100 movies of all-time.

*A book recommendation*

In 2014, we did a sermon series titled, *Glittering Vices*, on the seven deadly sins. Much of it was drawn from a book by that title written by Rebecca Konyndyk Deyoung. Her book is well-written and filled with insights.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott