

I really need to get something across to you today. I don't care what you think. Your opinion doesn't matter to me! Now, before I go on, let me explain. As we study God's Word today, well, anytime we study the Scriptures what your opinion is, or what my opinion is ... doesn't matter at all.

Because when it comes to issues of faith and direction from the Scriptures and matters of eternal life and eternal death, it doesn't matter what we think. What matters is what God says!

That may be tough to swallow. You've always been told your opinion does matter. The advertising industry is based on your opinion and what you choose ... whether to go to Chick-fil-A or the Golden Arches.

Now, it's popular to choose your church the way you choose fast food. You shop around until you find a church that tastes good, that's warm and cozy, that does worship the way you like it, that doesn't expect too much, and the preacher keeps us entertained.

I hope you didn't come here today for those reasons, because as nice as worship may be and having a caring and welcoming family of believers; when it comes to what the church teaches and matters of faith, it's not your opinion or my opinion that count. What counts is what God says.

Psychologists would cringe at this and say your sense of self-worth has been damaged. But, actually, that's a good thing. What counts in the sight of God is not our self-worth as an individual. What counts before God is something we're going to call our **Selfless-Worth**.

Self-less Worth is not a term found in any psychology or counseling book. But it does describe the Christian attitude that you and I want to have and hold onto in our hearts.

We see an example of **Selfless-Worth** in the OT prophet Jeremiah. I want to tell you a little bit about him. Jeremiah wrote the words of today's

lesson from the book of Lamentations. Jeremiah did his work about 600 years before Christ, during the final and darkest days of the kingdom of Judah. The spiritual life of God's people in Judah had sunk to an all-time low. Their worship life was only mindless ritual, just going through the motions. Their worship life had completely abandoned the true God to the point that it included temple prostitution in the name of religion.

It was in these days when God was fed up with the sins of his people that he called Jeremiah to preach a very specific message: "**Repent and get rid of this godless idolatry or I, the Lord your God, will destroy you!**"

That's not a message the people wanted to hear. So, the people took out their anger on the messenger. Jeremiah was harassed, mistreated, tortured, even imprisoned because he refused to stop preaching and telling the people their opinions didn't matter. What mattered is what God says.

Jeremiah did live long enough to see God carry out his promise when the armies of Babylon lay siege to the city of Jerusalem. It was nasty. Nothing came in and nothing went out of the city for a year and a half. He saw God's people reduced to eating and drinking their own filth. Mothers cannibalized their own children to survive. And in the year 586 BC, when the forces of Babylon breached the walls of Jerusalem, he saw many people either slaughtered or taken captive. He also saw Solomon's temple, the center of their faith and worship life, burned to the ground.

Jeremiah's self-worth may have taken a pounding, but it was his **Selfless-Worth** that gave him hope and got him through these dark hours: "**Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.**"

Self-worth is the value we place on ourselves. **Selfless-Worth** describes a value that has nothing to do with ourselves. **Selfless-Worth** comes from

knowing that the Lord values you. That's what got Jeremiah through his tough times.

He knew that his life was wrapped up in God's compassion, not people's opinions. His confidence was in the God who called him to be a prophet and servant of the Most High God, and an heir of everlasting life, and not in what others thought of him.

What would it do to your self-worth, if your reputation, your possessions, your job ... everything you had ... was taken away and all you had was the ridicule of others? What would it do to your self-worth, if you had no one you could count on, trust in, or turn to, not even your own family? Then you'd be Jeremiah. And you'd still have the Lord your God.

You know what tragedy is. You've had to say goodbye to someone very special when they closed their eyes in death. You know that life isn't all sunny days. There are the dark clouds of financial difficulties, marriage problems, rebellious kids, demanding parents and criticism from friends. Those things can make us feel lower than low.

Try to think about your tragedies and dark clouds from a different perspective. When facing those things, where do you turn? Did they force you to turn to the Lord? If you hadn't experienced those tragedies and dark clouds would you have been looking to the Lord?

Maybe they're not all bad if they focus our faith on the Lord and wait on him. How else could Jeremiah have written: **"The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust – there may yet be hope"**?

The Lord's taken away our self-worth and sent us into the depths. Now he's ready to build us up. Only when our reasons for self-confidence are removed, then only God is left for us to rely on.

And now he can speak to us about our true value and worth.

Have you ever asked yourself: *"How much am I worth?"* How much is the person sitting next to you, in front of you, or behind you worth? Society says: *"They may be worth millions, or they may have nothing, so they are worthless."* But God looks at you and those around you differently. He says: *"Your worth isn't measured by what you have, how smart you are or how good you look. Your worth and value can be measured in the suffering and sacrifice of my Son."* Jeremiah says here: **His compassions are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.** Daily, God pours an endless supply on you ... leading you to repent, to receive his forgiveness and then announces you're clean for the eternity he has planned for you in his presence.

"Can you beat that?" Can you find a substitute for **Selfless-Worth**? There is nothing in all the world that gives more value than the plan God has already set into motion, the salvation of your soul.

How can you beat the love of a God who permits troubles in our lives to destroy our self-worth and build up our **Selfless-Worth**. Again describes so well: **"Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love."**

How can you beat the love of a God who says: *"Every sinner is extremely valuable to me. I will shed my Son's blood and give, as a gift to every believer in him, eternal life, blessing and pleasure."*

Learn from the Prophet Jeremiah. Be filled with **Selfless-Worth** as God's servant. Find satisfaction in God's great love which is new every morning. Value your soul, for the Lord's compassions never fail. That's what matters! That's what counts! Because that's what God says!