

Blindsided!

17th Sun. after Pent. – 09/19/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Jeremiah 11:18-20 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 18, [Jeremiah says,] **“The LORD made it known to me and I knew; then You showed me their deeds”.**

Introduction

- ⊗ I know that some of you despise the sport of football and some of you love it, just as some love the theater while others do not. So what is a pastor to do when there is no such thing as one illustration that ticks every box for every person every Sunday?
 - ➔ Well, today, I’m asking the “sports haters” out there to be patient with me and do your best to look at today’s illustration for what it is, just one of many earthly examples to help us understand the depth of our mysterious Lord and His relationship with His redeemed people.
- ⊗ Here it goes: The quarterback walks up to the line of scrimmage, surveys the field and the opponents defensive set in front of him to see what he’s facing. He yells out an audible for the adjustments needed and then shouts the snap count.
 - ➔ The ball is snapped. He drops back into the pocket to pass, having only seconds to scan the field and find the open receiver because the defensive linemen and a stunting linebacker are closing in fast.
- ⊗ You see, standing in “the pocket” is a precarious place! The quarterback can see the rush in front of him and to the side in his peripheral vision, but the one thing he can’t do is see directly behind. That’s called his “blind side”.
 - ➔ So for a right-handed quarterback, the left tackle is one of the highest-paid players on an NFL team, because his most important job is to protect the quarterback’s blind side.
- ⊗ One famous NFL player who played left tackle from 2009-2016 is Michael Oher. He grew up homeless in Tennessee. After being rescued by the Tuohy family, he entered a Christian school where he learned to play football and ultimately received a scholarship to play for the University of Mississippi. Many of you may remember the 2009 movie, *The Blind Side* that starred Sandra Bullock as Leigh Anne Tuohy, whose amazing Christian family changed Michael Oher’s life.
 - ➔ Oher is tough and strong. More important, he’s loyal. He would do anything humanly possible to protect his quarterback’s blind side.
- ⊗ If only the prophet Jeremiah had a left tackle to protect his blind side as he stood up to pass on the Word of God to the people of Judah!

I. Jeremiah is blindsided by a plot.

- ⊗ Jeremiah has often been called the weeping prophet because, while he brings God’s judgment of impending doom to Judah, he loves the people so much that he continually weeps over them.
 - ➔ Unfortunately, at the time of our Old Testament Reading, the people of Judah don’t necessarily love Jeremiah back. His was perhaps one of the biggest blindsides in all of the Old Testament. In the three verses of our text today, we learn about a plot against Jeremiah; a plot verse 19 says is “to cut him off from the land of the living” so “that his name (would) be remembered no more”.
 - ➔ But what we also learn is that God was watching out for His weepy prophet.
- ⊗ The Book of Jeremiah can sometimes be difficult to understand. It’s mostly poetry and prophecy. But today’s reading is neither. It’s a side note in the middle of the story. We’ve all

seen times in a movie or a play when the character turns away from the action and speaks directly to the audience or into the camera. This technique is called an “aside”.

→ In previous verses, Jeremiah is revealing the Word of the Lord to His people, but then a shift in writing takes place. It’s as if he turns away from the prophecy and toward you and me as the reader, to describe this plot against him. Jeremiah says in verse 19, “I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not know it was against me they devised schemes”.

✘ You see, the people of Judah didn’t like God’s Word that Jeremiah was proclaiming to them. So, they were working behind the scenes to shut him up.

→ And it wasn’t just a simple negative reaction to the message they were hearing. They were scheming among themselves, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit” (vs. 19). This was not a plan to simply tackle the quarterback for a loss on the play. Their intent was to put Jeremiah completely out of commission; to annihilate him permanently. It seems being God’s prophet is much more violent than playing football.

→ And Jeremiah was completely blind to the entire threat – until God revealed the plot. Verse 19 says that Jeremiah was like “a gentle lamb”, without a clue about the slaughter that was about to happen. He was completely blindsided.

II. We too are completely blindsided at times.

✘ When a person is blindsided it can cause tremendous damage. In 1955, psychologists Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham developed a technique to help identify a person’s blind side. It’s a social science tool they called “the Johari window”. It is a matrix that graphically identifies the things we don’t know about ourselves but others do. If others are bold enough to share our weaknesses with us, we grow. This protects our blind side.

→ So why did Jeremiah get caught with a blind side? We aren’t given all the details, but we can deduce a few things from Jeremiah’s life. He is from the same hometown as those he’s preaching to and probably felt a sense of camaraderie with them. He dearly loved the people of Judah. But perhaps he was blindsided by the plot against him because he believed they would know the difference between God’s messenger and God Himself!

✘ Apparently though they didn’t care about that distinction, and Jeremiah didn’t see it coming. That’s the danger of having a blind side. Until we actually get hurt we aren’t able to look back to see where we missed the signals. It’s what former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld used to call “an unknown unknown.” We simply don’t see it coming. We can’t know what we don’t know!

→ But why are we so unaware of our blind side? One big reason is that we too often think more highly of our abilities than we should. We know our own hearts and minds, and looking at ourselves in the mirror we believe that we are fully on top of things. We trust our own instincts and so for example, we are convinced that nothing bad can come to us if we disconnect from God’s gifts of Word and Sacrament in weekly worship in order to allow us, or our kids, to plug into a weekend sports league or join a camping club or just stay home because it’s more convenient to “worship on our own”. Or we believe that we are strong enough in our faith to discern and not give in to the temptations we face in watching shows or attending activities with sexually explicit activities or coarse language or other things that are contrary to God’s will.

→ But friends, we should know from experience and from Scripture that the human condition is full of sin and can’t be trusted. Even though we’d like to be able to trust in our own minds and hearts, we are trusting in minds and hearts that are imperfect and flawed by sin and its corruption.

- ✘ In fact, if you follow the theory of the Johari window, there's no way at all to protect ourselves from our blind side. It is just part of the human condition after the fall into sin.

III. God knew our blind side and faced it for us.

- ✘ As we see today, the story in our reading ends well for Jeremiah. It's as if God was actually playing left tackle for His quarterback, Jeremiah; protecting his blind side.
 - ➔ Not only did God alert Jeremiah to the people's plan, He also saw to it that the slaughter was abated, and Jeremiah was saved. Again, the text doesn't give us the details of how God revealed the plot or how the slaughter was avoided, but in later verses, Jeremiah shows that God did punish his potential attackers, again without much in the way of additional details.
- ✘ We do see though in verse 20 what Jeremiah writes as he sings the praises of God, "But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously...to you have I committed my cause".
 - ➔ As Jeremiah looks back at everything, he realizes that it all stemmed from an incorrect judgment of his own heart. Those who plotted against Jeremiah reacted only to the words that they heard. They couldn't know what was in Jeremiah's heart. And Jeremiah, too, only knew what was in his own heart and mind and nothing more. Only an omnipotent God is able to see the whole picture and judge everything with righteousness.
- ✘ You see, God is never blindsided. When He looks at you and me, he sees the parts of the Johari window that none of us can see. He sees the dangers and the pit falls. He sees the lies and deceptions long before we ever do.
 - ➔ He is the God of "known knowns". He sees the present and future impact of our sinful nature well in advance. He knows perfectly our folly when we trust in our own judgments instead of His. We may think that we know everything about ourselves, but that is the very definition of foolishness.
- ✘ Only God knows everything. And when He first looked at our lives, He saw our complete and utter failure to see our own weaknesses. So, what did He do? Did He just turn aside and let the devil and the evils of this world attack us without any hindrance?
 - ➔ No, He stepped into the middle of things to protect us; especially our blind side. He sent us a Savior; His Son, Jesus to redeem us from all the times that by trusting in our own sinful nature we have walked boldly into a blind spot.
- ✘ Like Jeremiah, Jesus was a hometown boy; He had great compassion for those around Him, and He spoke God's truth to them.
 - ➔ And as with Jeremiah, Jesus' listeners didn't like the message He proclaimed about their sin; about the danger of trusting in themselves. And so they plotted to kill Him, too. And they succeeded, having Him nailed to a cross.
 - ➔ But what seems like a loss on the surface was actually the greatest victory of all. Jesus was willing to do anything, even sacrifice His own life to protect you and me from every one of our blind sides. And although He died, He soon foiled the enemy's plot and broke through the chains of death, rising from the grave, to set us free!
 - ➔ Yes, it is Jesus' death and resurrection that now delivers us both from the sins we know, and even the ones we don't.

Conclusion

- ✘ By ourselves, there is no way that we can protect our blind side. As long as we remain in this sin-soaked world with our sin-plagued life, we will constantly be at risk because of the fact that we cannot see our unknown unknowns.
 - ➔ But take heart Christians; be confident as you pick up the ball and look at the Christian life ahead of you, because those “unknowns” will not kill you, as long as you have the Lord Jesus at Your side. He has promised in Matthew 28:20, “behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”.
 - ➔ He’s got not only your blind side, but He protects us on all sides, so that as Paul assures us at the end of Romans, chapter eight, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).
- ✘ Why? How is that possible? Because the “LORD of hosts...who tests the heart and the mind” (v.20) sees His own gift of grace and faith at work in you. He sees His own Son Jesus’ blood upon you and He knows, as it was with Jeremiah, so it is with you now today: in Jesus you have “committed your cause” (v.20).
 - ➔ In Jesus alone your blind sides are covered. In Him alone do you live and breathe and have your being, today and forever! Amen.