



## On The Road With Rick...

To tell you the truth, I'm not writing this message while "on the road..." I'm actually sitting right now in a little corner booth, outside the Avant-Garde Cafe...on a cruise ship in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico. In the past, I've preached in churches, schools, prisons, court rooms, Senate Chambers, on the streets and even in bars. But this has been my first time to preach on a cruise ship. I guess it's gone pretty good, there haven't been any storms and no one's gotten swallowed by a whale.

My good friend, Buff McNickle, is the Singles' Pastor at Idlewild Baptist Church in Tampa. The cruise was their singles' ministry retreat (Florida churches rock!). I got to bring Kim along with me. She said there was no way she was going to let me go on a singles' cruise without her (too many episodes of "Love Boat" growing up). Plus, she's the one who loves cruises! We've both had a great time. The 40 singles from Idlewild have made us feel a part of their family. They've listened intently to my messages and shared their own hearts around many a late night cup of coffee. They're already planning a ladies' retreat with Kim as their guest speaker and a clothing drive for our thrift store. We preach at a lot of churches every year, but to be honest, most are just a ship that passes in the night (no real connection). I believe this church will continue to be a part of Harvest Evangelism for years to come.

Isn't it wonderful how God continues to use Harvest Evangelism across America and around the world (Kim will be ministering in India July 23-August 1). Isn't it neat how He arranges friends; brothers and sisters in Christ, to stand with us and help support the Ministry of Harvest Evangelism? So, once again, I'm writing you from out on the road...only this time, it's a blue highway of waves and water. Our God is Lord of land and sea, so it seems somehow very right to be about His business even out here in the middle of nowhere.

It's easy to lose track of the real world in the summer. Economic woes don't seem to penetrate Disney vacations and weekends at the lake. Terrorism and tragedy don't seem to darken the July sun and firework shows. You can forget all about the cries of suffering amidst the crack of baseball bats and the smell of hotdogs. But, summer is almost over...

Even as I write this on a cruise ship hundreds of miles out in a deep blue sea, a television over the coffee bar jolted me back to reality announcing, "Five Churches Bombed in Baghdad Today". The silent ticker trailing across the bottom of the T.V. invaded my cruise with reminders of job losses, murders, corrupt leaders, wars, famine, and self serving "representatives" (and all that was sandwiched between two commercials). The world did not stop while I was gone.

I know many of you reading this message are going through tough times. Last week I visited my 21 year old nephew who has cancer. I saw the fear in his eyes. Some of you see such a look every morning as you look in the mirror. I can't count how many of you have written, emailed, or called to ask us to pray as you face painful, depressing, diseases. Cancer seems as common as the cold.

We've struggled financially this year amidst the worst economic conditions in years. Yet we realize what we've gone through is nothing compared to the devastation some of our friends have faced. I have men calling me almost daily asking if I know of anyone who needs their grass cut or other menial labor. These are men who just weeks before had jobs with good pay, insurance and a retirement plan. Now all they want is a job, any job, just to put food on their table and keep their homes out of foreclosure. These are as the author put it, "times that try men's souls."

I've kept you in my mind and in my heart as I've prepared this message. It is a word from another dark and difficult time. Although the scriptures I've chosen come from several thousand years ago and half a world away, they still speak to us. God's word is forever eternal and forever true. I hope this message ministers to you wherever you are, whatever you are doing. It's my prayer each month that somehow God will use us to minister to you, our friends, His children.

If this message does speak to you, please drop us a line (or email; [rickhagans@harvestevangelism.org](mailto:rickhagans@harvestevangelism.org)). We put a lot of time and considerable cost (for a small ministry like our's) to provide these messages. They are not a vain attempt to spread my opinions or elevate my name. The only reason we send these words out is to glorify our Lord Jesus, fulfill His call on our lives and be a blessing to our friends. Hopefully, prayerfully this message will accomplish all three. *Rick*

### Extracting The Precious From The Worthless:

I'm no prophet. You can look at our ministry's bottom line or my personal financial statement and see there's "no profit". I'm not even the 'son of a prophet'. My dad was a mechanic. I don't even study prophecy. The thought of a "wheel within a wheel" makes me dizzy. I don't understand Daniel's 70 weeks or Revelations' time table. The Jewish calendar holds no spiritual significance for me. I do good just to remember tomorrow's my day to pick up Dreamer after band practice. Show me a beast with 10 horns and I don't see hidden kingdoms...I see a nice mount to put over my fireplace.

So, the message I want to share with you comes from my heart, not my head. In fact, I believe this message comes

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From the desk of Rick Hagans

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from the heart of God and He's chosen me, the least likely of messengers to share it. As He's promised, it's the foolish things that He chooses to confound the wise.

These are troubled days we live in. It doesn't take a prophet to tell you that. All it takes is the morning paper or the evening news. I believe these are the last days. I'm not counting, but I believe time as we've known it is running out. Scripture after scripture speaks to such a truth. You don't need a television preacher live from Jerusalem to verify such, all you need is a Bible.

One particular scripture that's come to me recently that shares an end time message is **Jeremiah 15**. Jeremiah is not easy reading. It's meat for the mature soul. Jeremiah was known for his weeping. So, reading the Book of Jeremiah isn't your typical summer beach-read fare. Yet it's where God has been drawing me. Jeremiah 15 in particular.

Jeremiah 15 begins with God speaking some hard words to this broken-hearted prophet. *"Then the Lord said to me, 'Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with these people, send them away from My presence and let them go...'"*

God goes on in verses 2-10 to describe the wandering judgements in store for these rebellious, unrepentant people. Summarize it to say, it was bad. Verse 3 says it would be four times bad. 4 x bad = trouble any way you count it!

And they deserved it. You need to know the people God was speaking about had sinned grievously, continually. They had sinned all the while God was wooing and warning them. They had sinned as the New Testament later describes such as "sinning against the Light". They knew better but did worse.

Their continued, ever growing sin had angered God. Yes, God gets angry. You don't hear a lot about that side of God from today's feel-good T. V. preachers, but you need to...it's true. Sin breaks God's heart. Continued sin, unrepentant sin makes Him angry. I believe America today is in a similar position. God moved upon Jeremiah to do something about his generation. He gave him a word to speak to them. We'd be wise to listen. Our days are eerily the same.

Let me briefly outline what Israel had done to invoke such wrath. Their sin began during the reign of a particularly popular king, Manasseh. You'll find the history of Manasseh's reign in the Book of II Kings 21.

The synopsis of Manasseh's tenure on the throne was: verse 2, *"He did evil in the sight of the Lord according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel."*

A modern day correlation would be the leaders in our lifetime who do evil according to God's standards and we have plenty of them, both Democrat and Republican. Whether it's governors having affairs, or presidents encouraging homosexual marriages and abortion. **IT IS WRONG!** It is sin and such provokes the wrath of God.

Verse 3, *"He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them."*

Manasseh was a leader with no sense of history, no respect for the godly heritage he had been handed. I could share forever on this point's modern day comparison. Suffice it to say when our president tells a Muslim audience in the heart of a land whose people hate us, and war against us, that, "America isn't a Christian nation," he tells only of a once great truth. Today, with a culture that clamors for pleasure and ease and endless self gratification, no, sadly so, we are not a Christian nation. But once, before these same men destroyed us, we were. Not perfect, not ever, but the America of George Washington's day, (*"It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible."* -George Washington); and the America of our "greatest generation", only now just passing, was certainly a Christian nation, as close as you can get to such an ideal. The sad truth is, our leaders have been too often dishonest, self-serving, Manesseh-like in building a kingdom to meet their needs and fulfill their desires. Our churches have too often been like the religious leaders of that day; no fire in their bellies, no word from a burning bush, only the false flames offered to a thousand phoney religious movements. And us? We're not exempt from this indictment for all too often we've either apathetically sat aside and done nothing or blazingly joined the party of the popular. They "worshipped all the host of heaven and served them." Are we any different?

Verse 6 *"He made his sons pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord provoking His anger."*

Manasseh was such a selfish parent he thought nothing of making his sons "pass through fire", a devilish ritual of child sacrifice. It sounds horrible because it was, but is our sacrifice of 49,551,703 (+) million babies on the selfish altar of abortion any different? Manasseh killed dozens, maybe hundreds, while we've killed or watched being killed 49,551,703 million, within one generation. Tell me, who's the most guilty???

The witchcraft, divination, mediums, and spiritualists of Manesseh's day could not begin to compare with the sheer number, volume and depth of depravity we see today. A church in Southern Louisiana near a friend of mine, was recently raided and closed down when Federal agents uncovered satanic rituals of perverse sexual abuse of children, some as young as 6 months old. The pastor was the ring leader. A church leader in Atlanta recently announced his nephew, their assistant pastor, was actually his own son. Some of the services in churches all across America border on occult ritual. We won't wait to hear from God, but we can't wait to hear whoever the current popular prophet is, even if he just divorced his wife or was caught in some gross compromise.

And what about the once evil practice of witchcraft, spiritism, divination, etc...that today has become mainstream?

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You can't turn on the television without an ad promoting what God condemns. II Kings 21:6 says, Manasseh's participation in such "provoked God to anger." I hate to have to explain it to the seeker-sensitive, feel-good gospel of champions, but habitual, unrepentant sin in the very face of God makes Him mad, very mad. In fact, such sin made God so angry He allowed His children, the nation of Israel, to be taken captive by their enemies. A people who had struggled and travelled and fought for their freedom went sullen and silent into captivity. They were a nation going out, as T.S. Elliot wrote, "not with a bang, but a whimper." The drum beat of today's religion dying.

When Jeremiah comes on the scene with a word from God, the people are reluctant to receive it. They had rather suffer a now familiar, foreign land than to humble themselves and hear from God. Nonetheless, God had a word for them (and ultimately for us).

In the midst of captivity and calamity, Jeremiah was there with a word from God. Listen to the promise of an ever loving God, even when He was "angry". Jeremiah 15:11, *"The Lord said, surely I will set you free for purposes of good; Surely I will cause the enemy to make supplication to you in a time of disaster and a time of stress."* The truth was that Jeremiah was captive in the same land of exile as his people. The greater Truth was then as it is now, *"whom God sets free is free indeed!"* (John 8:36)

Jeremiah was free in spite of his circumstances. He was free because God set him free and God set him free, the scripture says here, "for purposes of good."

Today our ministry works in large part with people enslaved. We serve people held in bondage to drugs, alcohol and all manner of "life-controlling" habits. The men and women in our program homes (His Place, Hosanna Home, Hope's Inn) will tell you how heroin, meth-amphetamine, cocaine, and Jack Daniels took them into a strange land of addiction where pimps and pushers ruled over them in a world of neon light and shadows. The men and women we work with once attended church, taught Sunday School, "were saved", but like Jeremiah's neighbors, they traded their faith for a freedom of tentacles and chains.

Those aren't the only types of slaves we serve. The truth is, most of the people I preach to in church on Sundays are slaves too. Slaves to dead religion and do nothing ritual. I can't count the men and women I know who confess they feel chained to church committees that meet but never move. Their faith seems to bind them, not set them free. People tell me all the time, we wish we could serve God with the freedom and faith you seem to have. To which I always reply, "You can...step out and let God do a work in you, then through you." But, they usually slink away and go back to the black hole of religion the crawled out of, because they're slaves and they don't know how to live as free men.

Jeremiah lived among slaves. Technically, he was a slave too. He had been taken into exile with the rest of his people. Legally he was under the same bondage as all those around him were. But even in slavery's exile, Jeremiah was free.

- Free of guilt and shame
- Free of fear and worry
- Free of sin's suffering...Free!

While all his fellow countrymen struggled under slavery's heavy yoke, Jeremiah had found that by walking with God, his "yoke was easy and his burden was light". (Matthew 11:29)

Have you met people like that? People who seem to always have a smile even when their world is never sunny? People who have a contagious joy even though you know they live in deplorable conditions? They don't have a reason to rejoice, but they rejoice anyway?

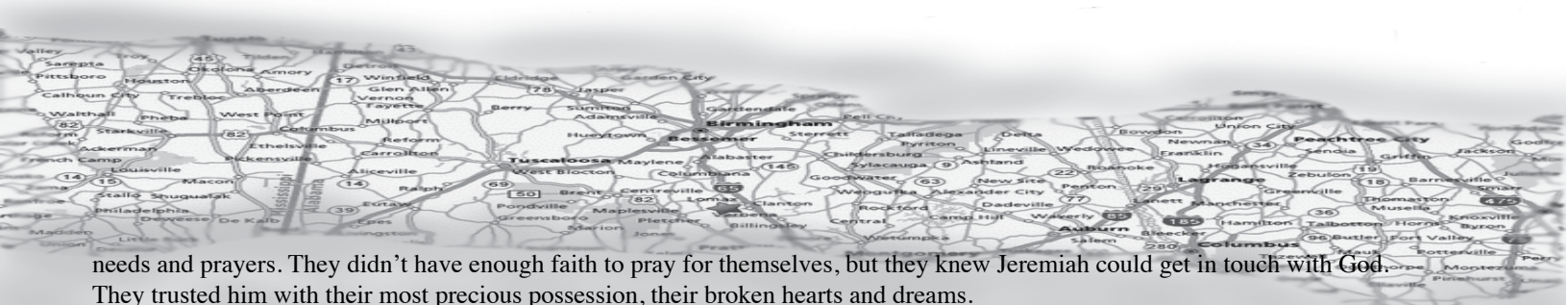
*I remember meeting a 104 year old widow in Mezquital, Mexico after a hurricane had blown the roof off every shack in her little island community. Her house was completely destroyed like everyone else's, but unlike everyone else, she was sitting on the heap that had once been her home...and she was laughing. She wasn't out of her head hysterical, she was simply so full of Jesus she rejoiced that He had spared her life. She said she didn't need a house, she could crawl up under the rubble and live there. Her hope wasn't in her home there, but in a home beyond any hurricane's reach that Jesus was preparing for her. We had the money, (thanks to Times Square Church) to repair hundreds of houses. We hadn't planned on re-building any from scratch as we could help more by replacing hundreds of roofs rather than building entirely new structures. But you know me...you can guess what we did. We put roofs on 135 houses, and we built one new home...That lady was happy to live like a rat in a hole, so you can imagine her joy when we told her we were going to build her a new house. No, no you can't imagine it, not unless your imagination includes a 104 year old woman dancing around the rubble of a century of her life. One by one she pulled every one of us into her dance. True joy in the midst of real freedom will do that. It'll move you to give expression to your faith and pull everyone around you into the gravity of your gratitude.*

God told Jeremiah what He tells us today, (He's the same, yesterday, today and forever, and He's not a respecter of persons). So, what the Lord said to Jeremiah speaks to us today; *"Surely I will set you free for purposes of good."* God doesn't set us free while everyone around us struggles in sin just so we can chill out and do our own thing. He doesn't even set us free as a popular Christian song proclaims, "I am free to run, I am free to dance..." but rather He sets us free to do good. (& oh, by the way, I still like to sing the song about being free to run...just run to someone in need.)

Jeremiah's freedom was such that people saw something in him, something that led them to come to him with their

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needs and prayers. They didn't have enough faith to pray for themselves, but they knew Jeremiah could get in touch with God. They trusted him with their most precious possession, their broken hearts and dreams.

What do people see in you? What do they trust you with? If God has set you free, how are you using your freedom?

Once free, God told Jeremiah, *"Therefore, thus says the Lord, if you return to Me, then I will restore you--before Me you will stand, and if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman..."* Jeremiah 15:19

What a beautiful promise. What a worthy, lofty goal, "to extract the precious from the worthless." That's exactly what we do at Harvest Evangelism, extract the precious from the worthless. The men and women who come to us are drug addicts, alcoholics, broken shells of humanity. Yet when Christ comes into their lives they become something precious, new creations that house the Holy Spirit, precious by any standard. Their testimonies are the promise God made to Jeremiah, because, as D.L. Moody once said, "the world would rather see one Lazarus than to hear a hundred more sermons on the resurrection." Our men and women are modern day Lazaruses and you know what? The world does indeed listen to them.

You too can see the fulfillment of God's promise when you allow Him to "extract the precious from the worthless" in your lives. You may not be a drug addict or an alcoholic, but your sin is just as dreadful. In fact Isaiah says even your righteousness is but filthy rags before Him. Yet God sees something precious in the worthlessness of our own feeble efforts. He sees the potential for new life, abundant life, eternal life. When Jesus lives in our lives it is the epitome of "extracting the precious from the worthless."

The Bible is filled with God extracting the precious from the worthless:

A washed up Samson, blind and bound seemed pretty worthless to his Philistines captors who mocked him, but God extracted the precious from him in his final act, *"so the dead he killed at his death (his worthless state) were more (the precious) than he had killed in his life."* (Judges 17:30)

Jonah was about as worthless as any traveller could've ever felt, all alone sinking and stinking in the dark belly of a whale (talk about worthless, he's fishbait). But...how precious does he become when God later uses him to bring revival to an entire people.

Eve surely felt worthless after eating that "apple" and giving it to her husband. Imagine how she felt as the angels closed the gates of Eden behind her. Her family would now die, all humanity would die because of her worthless act. Even here, God extracts the precious from the worthless because it is also from Eve we all come and even more precious, it is from her that HE came. Jesus is the most precious extracted from Eve, the most worthless.

Your life may seem worthless at this moment, if so, take hope, God still extracts the precious from the worthless. If you'll call out to Him and give Him your worst, He'll touch your heart and bring out the best.

You may hurt so bad that you can't find words for your pain. It's ok, ask Helen Keller. He hears the heart that has no cry. You give Him what you have, even if it's broken, and you know what? He'll make something out of it.

Who knows, you might even walk away singing,;

"Something beautiful, something good. All my confusion, He understood. All I had to offer Him, was brokenness (and worthlessness) and strife, but He made something beautiful (and precious) of my life."

\*\*This message (Extracting the Precious From the Worthless) will soon be available as a podcast on [www.harvestevangelism.org](http://www.harvestevangelism.org)

You can order it on DVD by sending \$5 (to cover our cost and shipping) to Harvest Evangelism, PO BOX 2888, Opelika, Alabama 36803 or contacting us (334/742-0777, [contactus@harvestevangelism.org](mailto:contactus@harvestevangelism.org)).

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