



*"...The heart of the sons of men
is full of evil,
and madness is in their heart
while they live..."
(Ecclesiastes 9:3)*

*Wherewith shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before the high God?
He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the LORD require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with thy God?
(Micah 6:6, 8)*

a homily on just society and our mad state of rebellion

healing our brokenness inadequately (part 3):

lies, lies, and more lies

*"They heal my people's brokenness inadequately, asserting:
'It's OK! It's OK!'
But nothing is OK!" (Jeremiah 6:14, author's translation).*

Introduction

Judicial inequality and injustice. Economic inequality and injustice. Rampant greed and fraud on the part of wealthy individuals and essential institutions. Bribery and corruption of government officials. Inordinate influence of the wealthy of laws and public policy. Unjust laws and policies favoring the powerful and influential while disadvantaging the less powerful and influential. The infliction of the vulnerable with hunger, homelessness, sickness, and anxiety. Self-righteous justification of the mad state of rebellion. Stubborn refusal to acknowledge these and a host of other societal ills.

No, I am not talking about America of 2024. However, if the shoe fits...

I am talking about late 6th and early 5th century B.C. Judah. These, and many other evils undermined the temporal, moral, and spiritual health of the nation. All the signs were there.

The nation was on the verge of collapse. It was in desperate need of truth, however sour it might be to the national palate. But the nation's shepherds fed the populace an empty diet of propagandistic myths of nationalism. Many of Israel's prophets joined the fray. Israel's watchmen, Jeremiah charged,

“Heal my people's brokenness inadequately, asserting:
‘It's OK! It's OK!’”

“But nothing,” Jeremiah replies, “is OK!”

Does this, too, sound familiar? Strike close to home? It should. Too often, today's religious leaders—whether they go by the name, “prophet,” “priest,” or “pastor”— seem to lack both discernment and courage. They seem utterly blind to and mute about sin and evil, unless, of course, it involves some form of real or imagined sexual deviance. If they do speak out, it is often with muted, vague, delicate, and generalized voices and statements. These shepherds seem not up to the challenging task of bold and clear truth telling of the sort that our society so desperately needs. Now is not the time for delicacy and caution.

This homily is the third in an ongoing series entitled, “Healing Our Brokenness Inadequately,” based on Jeremiah 6.¹⁴. In this series, we explore specific examples of individual and societal sins about which political and religious leaders all too often remain willfully blind or, if sighted, stubbornly mute... and therefore complicit. Tragically, sometimes their complicity is even active and enthusiastic. With these examples in mind, we will often call upon the classic Hebrew prophets as well as other ancient and not so ancient prophets to speak as if from the dust. We read these discerning writings in light of the societal ills and injustices that abound in our modern world. Sometimes we even imagine and take a stab at replicating what a Hebrew prophet might have to say if he were to come to us from the past.

In today's homily, we offer another example of our brokenness about which too many remain silent and worse, in which too many engage themselves. Such moments as ours desperately

cry out for the type of discernment, boldness, and truth-telling so characteristic of the Hebrew prophets.

The IRS, the national debt, and the GOP

The Hill recently posted a piece authored by Tobias Burns and Aris Folley entitled, “GOP plan to ‘offset’ Israel aid with IRS cuts would backfire, budget experts warn.” In it, the authors report that the alleged purpose of recently proposed GOP budget cuts to the IRS was to reduce the federal deficit. The piece pointed out that, in fact, the deficit would increase by tens of billions of dollars over the coming years, partly because a reduction in the IRS’ would stymie its efforts to collect tax dollars from rich tax cheats.

Now, we do not doubt the author’s reporting. No doubt, GOP leaders have spoken as the authors report. However, we are galled by the continued gullibility of the press, which continues to report the lie that the GOP cares anything about reducing the national debt—surely the unjust tax breaks given to the wealthy during TFG’s administration should have put that lie to bed once and for all. In fact, the GOP’s interest in reducing the IRS budget is much more sinister.

First off, the right simply wants to poke their finger in the left’s eye. It’s a fetish for them, really. So insecure are they in their own skin, that whether any action makes sense or not, it makes them feel good to think they might have gotten under a lib’s skin. So, because the left gave more money to the IRS, the right wants to take it away. The GOP is a party of immature pettiness and profound and pitiful insecurity. Tragically for our nation, even its highest leaders seem to have never matured beyond a high school level of student leadership.

Second, and more seriously, the modern GOP, including the House’ newest Speaker, does not believe in the federal government—imagine that! ... voters putting anti-government insurgents in government positions, a trend that began a generation ago with Ronald Reagan. But then, those who vote such traitors into office are “a stiffnecked people, insomuch that they [can] not be governed by the law nor justice, save it [is] to their destruction” (Hel. 5.³).

Speaker Johnson of the congress and his GOP marauders are like Book of Mormon kingmen who wish to alter the laws “in a manner to overthrow the free government” and establish an oligarchy (See Al. 51.⁵)—in the present case a “Christian” Nationalist autocracy akin to Hitler’s “National Socialists.” Cutting the IRS budget is meant to further this unhallowed aim. Many in the modern GOP are simply agents of chaos.

Neutering the IRS is intended to starve the federal government and assist in the GOP insurgency against the federal government. But neutering the IRS has a third goal. By neutering the IRS, the GOP can severely curtail the discovery of tax cheats and the holding of them accountable. After the blasphemous doctrine of such wicked wizards as Milton Friedman, the GOP believes that wealthy individuals and corporations, notoriously adept tax cheats and thus cheaters of the public weal, have no obligation to society, let alone to the federal government. Their only obligation is to other rich people, i.e., shareholders, and corporations. In addition, by sheltering the wealthy from having their fraud discovered and assisting them in avoiding their just responsibilities to society, the GOP can continue to be beneficiaries of the bribery that wealthy individuals and corporations are all too willing to pay for the privilege of not paying into the welfare of society.

Lies, lies, and more lies

Now, we could howl about any one of the multiple sins found in the GOP’s most recent attack on the IRS and the motives that inspire them. We could, for example, talk about how its love of money is the root of this and most other GOP evils. Or we could talk about the treachery of these modern-day king men and the danger they pose to American society and democracy. But, really, we have done all this many times over in the past. So, today, we choose to address the simple fact of their lying—and no, as we have stopped trying to keep up with the party leader’s... you know TFG... legendary and too-numerous-to-count lies, we will not address them.

AS we contemplate the stream of lies that come from the GOP, we think of the words spoken

by the Hebrew prophet, Jeremiah.

“Take ye heed every one of his neighbour,
and trust ye not in any brother:
for every brother will utterly supplant,
and every neighbour will walk with slanders.
And they will deceive every one his neighbour,
and will not speak the truth:
they have taught their tongue to speak lies,
and weary themselves to commit iniquity.
Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit;
through deceit they refuse to know me,
saith the LORD.”¹

So untrustworthy, so steeped in a lying spirit did individuals of ancient Israelite society become that Micah went so far as to warn citizens against trusting even the wife who laid in bed next to them (See Mic. 7.⁵)—one cannot doubt that the man laying in bed next to his wife was no more trustworthy. We live in such days of deceit. Alternative facts abound. Silly and irrational conspiracy theories proliferate. Lying is as natural as breathing. It seems, sometimes, to be the default position. The new national pastime.

Some lie because they are simply liars. More often, perhaps, others lie because they believe they are being lied to. Scripture is clear about the fate of the first class of liars: “all liars, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie... shall have their part in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”² The second class of liar is no better off as they have yielded to the satanic voice that says,

“Deceive and lie in wait to catch, that ye may destroy; behold, this is no harm.”

¹ Jeremiah 9.⁴⁻⁶

² DC 63.¹⁷

“Thus,” the Lord charges,

“He flattereth them, and telleth them that it is no sin to lie that they may catch a man in a lie, that they may destroy him. And thus he flattereth them, and leadeth them along until he draggeth their souls down to hell...”³

Now, to be clear, in the end, lying is not really about “alternative facts,” and “false data.” It is really less about speaking and more about doing. Lying is about doing harm. Those who knowingly lie possess a secret intent to harm other individuals and to disrupt society.

The Speaker of the House and his cronies mean to do harm when they lie about their motivation for cutting the IRS budget. They mean to harm the federal government. And they mean to harm our entire society, all for the sake of doing a favor for their wealthy bribers. Though I would disagree vehemently with them, I might respect them if they would tell the truth and own up to the true motivations for their proposed budget cuts—but, of course, they can’t tell the truth about their real motives because, though reasonably upset with it at times, most Americans believe the Federal government has an important role to play in society. Those Americans would run the liars out of town were they to tell the truth. The liars know this. Hence the lies.

So, what would the Hebrew prophets have to say about this were they to come back? Would they say anything? You bet they would. Any self-respecting prophet would. I am not prophet, but I can imagine it might sound something like this.

A cause of lamentation and warning!
Slaves to Master Mammon,
colluders with wealthy bribers—
for who can bribe but the monied?
Slaves, colluders, and bribers, together,
insurgent insiders,

³ DC 10.²⁵⁻²⁶

mutineers inside the halls of governance
marauders inside American business
stingy, tight-fisted, greedy, lust-driven
plunder cherished institutions and structures
slashing holes in the fabric of society
razing protection of the defenseless,
creating chaos with their lies
and anarchy for the root of all evil.

Masters of lying lips,
virtuosos of the deceitful tongue
dress themselves in the garb of patriot,
cloak their mutiny in virtue,
their lying lips, poison,
their deceitful tongue, daggers,
their garb, camouflage,
cloaks to hide their vice.

May they be ripped, and razed;
plundered as they have plundered.
May the poison of their lips flow inward;
their daggers of deceit slash backwards.
May Lying Mammon abandon them;
leave them penniless and poor paupers
shackled in darkness, cloaked in obscurity,
victims of the chaos they created.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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