

**Stand at the Crossroads**  
**Jeremiah 6:16**  
**CrossRoads Christian Fellowship September 16, 2007**

In order to appease Paula Rabel, Mark and Susan Larimer, and Dan McDowell – The National Football League opened the 2007-2008 football season a few weeks ago. I am sure all fans of American football thank them. This story made me think of these friends of ours but the story is for all of us this morning.

When seventeen-year-old Jake porter ran onto the field, both teams cheered. Odd that they would. Jake wasn't a football celebrity. In fact – the only ones that knew him were his coach, his team mates and a very few people in the stands. In three years on the football team he had barely dirtied a game jersey. The McDermont, Ohio, fans had never seen Jake carry the ball or make a tackle. Nor had they seen him read a book or write much more than a sentence. Kids with chromosomal fragile X syndrome, a common cause of mental retardation, seldom do.

But Jake loved sports. They are his passion. You could tell that if you were to walk into his room. The walls are covered with posters of his favorites, his dresser flooded with pictures of the greats, there are multiple jerseys hanging in the closet, there are stacks of trading cards neatly piled and organized. Each day after his special-ed classes, he dashed off to some practice: track, football, baseball, basketball. He never missed. Never played, either.

Until the Waverly game.

Jakes coach had decided before the kickoff. If a lopsided score made the final moments of the game a done deal, Jake would go in. The lopsided part proved true. With a few ticks remaining on the clock, his team was down 42-0. So the coach called a time-out.

He motioned to speak with the opposing coach. As his Waverly counterpart heard the plan, he began shaking his head and waving his hands. He disagreed with something. A referee intervened and play resumed.

The quarterback took the ball and handed it to Jake, the running back. Jake had been practicing this play all week, he knew what to do: put his knee on the field and let the clock expire. But, to his surprise, the players wouldn't let him. His team mates held him up and told him to run. So Jake ran. In the wrong direction. The back judge stopped him and turned him around. That's when the Waverly defense did their part. The visiting coach, as it turns out, wasn't opposed to Jake playing. He was happy for Porter to carry the ball and just run out the clock. The McDermont coach wanted Jake to score.

The Waverly players parted like the Red Sea for Moses and shouted for Jake to run. And run he did. Grinning and dancing and jumping all the way to the end zone – 22 players in

tow. Both sidelines celebrated. Mom's and Dad's cried, Cheerleaders cheered, and Jake smiled as if he had won the lottery without ever buying a ticket. A 42-6 game where both teams walked off the field, not to mention the fans, the water boys, the referees, and the announcer...everyone knowing they had won.

How often do such things happen? According to the Bible, more often than you might think. In fact, what Jake's team did for him, is exactly what the Lord of the universe wants to do for you and your life. We also participate with God as God's team on earth understanding that when we help each other score touchdowns for God –Live for Christ and in Christ - God is glorified. (story adapted from "Come Thirsty", by Max Lucado. P 107-108)

The coaches, the players and Jake all had a role in the unfolding story – to begin with, they all had choices, decisions to make. The Waverly coach and players were at a crossroads.

Of course, at a crossroads there is a decision of direction. Each direction is accompanied by a destination. The destinations are very different. One is the wrong direction and destination. Listen to God's word for you in Jeremiah 6:16-21- I'm confident you can picture the crossroads:

**16 God's Message yet again: "Go stand at the crossroads and look around. Ask for directions to the old road, The tried and true road. Then take it. Discover the right route for your souls. But they said, 'Nothing doing. We aren't going that way.' 17 I even provided watchmen for them to warn them, to set off the alarm. But the people said, 'It's a false alarm. It doesn't concern us.'**

**18 And so I'm calling in the nations as witnesses: 'Watch, witnesses, what happens to them!' 19 And, 'Pay attention, earth! Don't miss these bulletins.' I'm visiting catastrophe on this people, the end result of the games they've been playing with me. They've ignored everything I've said, had nothing but contempt for my teaching. 20 What would I want with incense brought in from Sheba, rare spices from exotic places? Your burnt sacrifices in worship give me no pleasure. Your religious rituals mean nothing to me." 21 So listen to this. Here's God's verdict on your way of life: "Watch out! I'm putting roadblocks and barriers on the road you're taking. They'll send you sprawling, parents and children, neighbors and friends - and that will be the end of the lot of you." (The Message translation)**

A crossroads. A choice. A decision. An outcome.

**Option 1:** Jeremiah makes it pretty clear. Follow God's way for your life and it leads to the right place for our souls. Others versions say we will find "rest for our souls". The right place or rest spoken of here is *a place of ease*. Interesting isn't it. Your soul will find a place of ease when you are walking obediently with God.

God tells us this way is the old way, ancient -tried, tested, and has proven to be true. It is the road God designed for you and everyone who has ever loved him. The map for this

life follows what God has said to you in his word to you – the Bible. It, God's word, leads to God and that's where our souls were created to be.

**Option 2:** The other way. The way that ignores, purposefully declines, and even has contempt for God's tried and true way. It is the road we design. It follows our own desires, freedom, our own reason, hope, and strength. It's popular too. Matthew 7:13 **13** "Enter through the narrow gate. The gate is wide and the road is wide that leads to destruction, and many people enter through that gate. **14** But the gate is small and the road is narrow that leads to true life. Only a few people find that road.

What we hear and feel deeply when considering these words -- is a powerful message about the character of the Living God. This is a word about God's frustration at the stubbornness of his beloved people. After all God has done for them (and for us), they (and we) turn from his ways so life can live a "normal life" doing as we please, quite comfortable joining in with the world around us - living with little or no regard for obedience to God – leaving God behind, happily going the wrong way – lord and king of our own lives.

What Jeremiah knew, and what we should never forget, is that to truly be God's we have to make choices -- hard choices; uncomfortable choices. Daily choices to be God's and to desire all God has for us as Lord and King of our hearts, souls and lives. And Christian choices have consequences. Christianity is not simply a decision for life; but also, it is a lifetime of decisions which moves us closer or further away from Christ.

Choice 1 - The ancient road. There are two lanes on the ancient road. Deuteronomy 4:10 gives them to us. **10** That day when you stood before God, your God, at Horeb, God said to me, "Assemble the people in my presence **to listen to my words** so that they will **learn to fear me in holy fear** for as long as they live on the land, and then they will teach these same words to their children." Two lanes on the ancient road - Hear God's words and fear God in **holy fear** = revere, respect, honor...trust God as sovereign Lord of life.

Hear God's word – Deuteronomy 32:45-47 **45** When Moses had finished saying all these words to all Israel, **46** he said, "Take to heart all these words to which I give witness today and urgently command your children to put them into practice, every single word of this Revelation. **47** Yes. **This is no small matter for you; it's your life.** In keeping this word you'll have a good and long life in this land that you're crossing the Jordan to possess."

In the Old Testament there is life through obedience to God's word. Deuteronomy 4:1-2 **1** Now listen, Israel, listen carefully to the rules and regulations that I am teaching you to follow **so that you may live** and enter and take possession of the land that God, the God-of-Your-Fathers, is giving to you. **2** Don't add a word to what I command you, and don't remove a word from it. Keep the commands of God, your God, that I am commanding you. It is like walking with God on the road that leads deeper into God. Disbelieving God's word was and is still disbelieving God. Disobeying God's word was and is still disobeying God. Dislodging yourself from God's word was and is still walking away from God.

I believe we can say that it is clear from the very beginning that God intended us to be obedient to his word. Follow it like a road and a map for living. It leads us to God's presence, reverence for God, a profound respect for God, and to life. For in it we find God alive and speaking.

Allow me to share a few things we know about this word of God. It was recorded over a period of about 1500 years. As far as we know, not one original document exists. It was hand copied and handed down generation to generation for about 2500 years. The Masarets were a part of the Jewish scribes. They hand copied the books of the Old Testament in Hebrew. They had a system whereby they knew the middle word of every sentence and the middle letter of every word...just to make sure they were getting it right. Why? Because God instructed them not to take from or add to it in any way (Deut. 4:2). That was the responsibility that all who wrote or copied the Bible felt in handling the word of God. Why? Because to them what they were recording were God's very words spoken from the very mouth of God. To change anything was to prevent God's people from being fully obedient to God and entering into sin.

In 1947, about 3000 years after God's word was first written down, a shepherd boy found a cave full of jars that were full of scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls. They found an entire copy of Isaiah and parts of every other book in the O.T. except Ezra or Esther. As they studied them they found that after 3000 years and 2500 years of hand copying - what we have today in the O.T is intact. This is incredibly important! What it tells us is that we can have confidence that what we read here are the words of God to us.

**2 Timothy 3:16 reminds us 16** Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another - showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. **17** Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.

God's word was divinely inspired and has been divinely protected (Hebrews 1:3. Col.1:17)

Now consider these words of God for you in **John 1** The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, **2** in readiness for God from day one. **3** Everything was created through him; nothing - not one thing! - came into being without him. **4** What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. **14** The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

The Word = Logos...the personal manifestation of God's spoken word, God's word made alive as life that was a light to live by.

And that word made flesh said this to you – **Matthew 27** Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly. "The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I'm not keeping it to myself; I'm ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen. **28** "Are you

tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. **I'll show you how to take a real rest.** **29** Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. **30** Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (The Message).

What Jeremiah hoped for Israel – Jesus delivered. The place of Rest for weary souls. The right way. Believe in Jesus. He is the ancient way re-paved. No more rough cobble stones roads of having to impossibly try to earn our way to God...but a smooth road of Grace made for and given to us in Jesus.

Why is this message on my heart this morning? This last week I was blessed to see some of what God has been doing. And it brought me to this crossroads. I saw how a brother struggled for his life and how a faithful friend who believes completely in God's word made personal in Jesus - prayed and fasted for him, even invited some 300 other faithful friends and Jesus delivered. Rest for a weary soul. A total victory.

**TOUCHDOWN! GOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAAAAALLLLLLL!**

I came face to face with a great hope that the people of God can set aside their / our individual game plans and work together as God's team– score some major big touch downs with God in the lives of those around them. To see lives changed. To glorify a truly wonderful and loving God and hold this God as Lord and Kind above all. When we help each other get to the business of believing and following Jesus, we all walk as winners.

I saw another man come to the crossroads. Hear of God's goodness, see God's hand offered to help, and walk away, the wrong way...even more empty and alone.

I sat back and saw lives given to God, women in this room, students in my class, who have learned to trust, respect, and have a healthy dose of holy fear for God. I marveled at decisions to follow Jesus with abandon. I was humbled to see believers intently dedicated to learning and living God's word for their lives. Hungering and thirsting for God's word. Making sacrifices to study, grow, and follow. Submitting humbly to their King. And I have been thankful for souls that have found rest and lives flourishing in Christ.

Jeremiah invites us– Go to the crossroads and look. See where your life is going. Look at who or what you are following and where it is taking you. Consider listening to God's word for the direction of your life and give your whole self to it with confidence knowing God is no liar. Ask for the old way where God is revered, respected, trusted as sovereign Lord and King. Touch your soul and ask if there is rest believing and following Jesus. Souls don't lie. They know who they were made for.

This morning you have been brought to the crossroads. Which way do you choose to follow?