

Jeremiah was called to weeping prophet, a man who had low moods. Here we see him in one of his lowest moods. In one verse he accuses God of deceiving him..and wonders why he was born. So if you want to hear someone talk about moods, listen to this man: "A curse on the man who brought word to my father, a child is born to you. Why did I come forth from the womb of my mother to know only sorrow and toil to the end of my days".

Let us note a few things that Jeremiah can help us with concerning the handling of moods.

1. Our moods can't be missed, but they can be managed.

Who can escape low moods? We think they belong to others, not to us. We want life that is always up, but it isn't always that way. Somehow, we have the impression that we need to always be exuberant with laughter.

On some days, tho, when you feel reflective and life is not hilarious, someone is very likely to say: "What's the matter" . . as tho your not smiling and laughing signals that something terrible is wrong. At that time, you can say that life has its mountains and it valleys, and that at that particular time you are a valley. And valleys can be beautiful.

Jeremiah had his mountains, as most of us. He wrote: Thy words become to me a joy and a delight in my hearts" (15:16)

But that didn't last..he went thru some valleys, but then, at

a later time, he could say "Thou art my fountain of living waters". (17:13). If you were ask Jeremiah: "How is your faith", he would probably say: "It's not as good as it was, & it's not as good as it's going to be".

What is obvious is that our moods are not permanent.

Jeremiah teaches us that we can't avoid these moods, but we can manage them.

~~A~~ We need to find the appropriate response to what causes our moods. We would be foolish if bereavement did not bring tears, but we are foolish if little irritations throw us into a dither.

A golfer hit 3 balls in a pond on a water hole. He walked up to the water and threw his clubs and bag in too. About 5 minutes later he came back, took off his shoes, dived in and dragged his bag out. He took his car keys out of it, and threw the bag back into the pond. You, **see**, the event did not warrant that kind of behavior. He should have saved his emotions for something more important.

So what can be done when the spirit sweeps low?

2 We need to see meaning in our moods.

Jeremiah managed to keep his moods from permanently distorting either his spirit or his vocation. He did not judge all of his life by his moods, he was able to judge his moods by some meaning.

Moods do have meaning. Our task is to attach the right


meaning so that they won't distort our lives.

3

Sometimes we have to wait for our spirit to catch up with our body. Some Africans, who serve as guides, will only go so far. Then they sit down and won't go further until, as they say, their spirits catch up with their bodies.

Some of our worst decisions are made when we do not have body and soul together. In fact an important step to getting out of a mood can be to nothing at all. Indeed is a deep low mood, that may be the worst thing to do . . . to do something. Moods are meant to be ventilated not implemented. In low moods things look distorted and overwhelming. Things grow up when we are tired and depressed, angry or afraid; and they shrink when we have regained perspective and poise. There are times when we need to be still.

To try to see meaning relieves us of our moods. Life is not all mud, it is stars as well. The man who sees stars is healthier than the one who sees only the mud.

 Then Jeremiah offers further guidance about handling moods. He says: "O Lord of hosts, to thee have I committed my cause". (11:20).

This is important because it is thru faith commitment that life takes on meaning, that it becomes significant. And thru a goal in life there comes hope and reason for being.

So we need to take a look at the meaning of our moods. They may mean that we are tired, we need to get perspective,

and they may surface because we don't see meaning to life. (4)

3. We need to try to see meaning in our moods, and we also need to see meaning beyond our moods.

There is something beyond the present mood, something to look toward. In Scotland, you can see country churches that still have lepers windows. They were windows thru which the outcasts could look while services were conducted inside. They couldn't get close to the people. Now all that seems strangely out of place. Things in this present period which seem like a nightmare will pass. Look back thru history. When people seemed hopeless^{ly} bogged down in despair, winds of regeneration began to stir. And that is something of our hope in the meaning beyond our moods . . . the possibility of regeneration. When things shift and change, the message is that we need to look beyond our moods.

Look to Jeremiah again. Instead of measuring the meaning of life by his passing moods, he measured the meaning of his passing moods by the understanding that there was something ultimate beyond those moods. He was saying that there are some things you can count on no matter how impermanent things seem. One of his passing moods caused him to perceive God as a deceitful brook. He recognized that as a passing mood, for he later said: "Have no fear, says the Lord, for I am with you". (42:11).

Some one was passing a rural church and noted the weathr

vane on it with the words "God is love". The man said to the country pastor: "Does that mean that God's love is as unpredictable as the weather?" "No", was the reply, "it means that no matter which way the wind blows, God is still love". Jeremiah had something of that faith.

4) But there is still another note in Jeremiah . . . the feeling that he could come to understand his own weakness. He says: "Praise the Lord, for he rescues". (20:13). Jeremiah was humbly saying: "I cannot handle life by myself. I need a God who can deliver me". We tend to become deeper in our moods when we think there is no rescue for us.

We get down in our moods when we feel overwhelmed with responsibility. Jeremiah seems to be saying . . . there are stronger hands than mine. That is a meaning that goes beyond our moods.

The story about a rooster perhaps will speak to us when we are overwhelmed with responsibility. A rooster, when he was quite young, got up before all the rest barnyard denizens and walked into the barnyard. Stretching himself after his nights sleep he crowed for the first time in his young life. He liked it so much, he did it again...and as he crowed the sun came up in the east. "My, My", Thought the rooster, "if my crowing ^{is} ~~is~~ all that important to bring up the sun, then I'd better get up early every morning and crow". So day after day, while the others still slept, he got up and crowed. And

sure enough, as he crowed, the sun came up. But one morning he overslept. All the others beat him into the branyard, and, awakened much later by their chatter, he rushed out, and what do you suppose. The sun had come up without his crowing.

I hope noon of us suffer from the "rooster complex". Many usurp responsibilities, worries, and hurts which do not belong to them. They are never able to rest . . . and they tend to think that lest they crow the sun will not rise. Their motto is "Rescue is for the perishing, not for the strong".

But there is a happier alternative. It is the kind of release which came to Dick Shepherd, a famous London preacher. He came to America for a preaching tour and halfway thru his schedule developed laryngitis, and it threatened the rest of his tour. It distraught him that he might have to cancel several appearances which had been widely advertized. But during his fitful tossing and worry one night he had a dream. He saw God Almighty pacing up and down the corridors of heaven, wringing his hands and saying over and over: "What am I going to do? What am I going to do? Dick Shepherd has a cold".

He had a cold and that was important, but not all-important.

Jeremiah was saying that we need to distinguish between what ~~is/important~~ we can control and what we cannot. We need to carry our responsibilities the best we can, and then let God carry the rest. Jeremiah said that God comes to our

rescue. Let us carry the weight we can, and when it becomes to heavy say: "I have done all I can". There is some place to lay your burden down. (7)

God gives us meaning beyond our moods, as well as giving meaning to our moods. We carry the load just so far, then we let go and let God. Then we shall find release, and we shall find new dimensions of joy and meaning.