

Dr. Joe Jursa's Sermon

[Wasting My Life](#) - I cause suffering because I do my own thing - Ezekiel 22:6-14

⁶ "Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. ⁷ Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you. ⁸ You have despised my holy things, and profaned my sabbaths. ⁹ There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and men in you who eat upon the mountains; men commit lewdness in your midst. ¹⁰ In you men uncover their fathers' nakedness; in you they humble women who are unclean in their impurity. ¹¹ One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you defiles his sister, his father's daughter. ¹² In you men take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and increase and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; and you have forgotten me, says the Lord GOD.

¹³ "Behold, therefore, I strike my hands together at the dishonest gain which you have made, and at the blood which has been in the midst of you. ¹⁴ Can your courage endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.

God had instructed Israel to live in a certain fashion, to live by certain laws. But Ezekiel calls them to understand they have ignored God's demands upon them, they have chosen another way to live, everyone is doing their own thing. And Ezekiel declares that God will clap his hands and their courage will fail, their hands will be weakened at the sound.

Preacher's kids always have a strange time in church. There are always some who watch and see how they act up and if they get away with it. Sometimes it is other kids wanting greater latitude from their parents, sometimes it is adults looking for the faults in other people's kids. Rather than embarrass our kids unnecessarily or give more meaning to their misbehaving than was needed she would snap her fingers in the worship service to warn them that they were crossing the line. A simple snap would get their attention and let them know added behavior along those lines would result in consequences they would prefer to avoid. What is really funny is that just a couple of years ago Ruth and Bree were sitting next to Linda and another mother snapped her fingers at her kids and both girls sat up real straight and tried to act right. Linda could not help but laugh about it over lunch as she retold the story to me.

She would snap her fingers and the girls would know. Here God declares to Israel that their actions have crossed the line and God will clap his hands to get their attention to return to the straight and narrow.

The people of Israel had chosen to do their own thing. They ignored God's laws, they gave into their own desires and in time all kinds of things had become part of the life of the community. Did you listen to the list of offenses? Tell me we could not take the same list out of the headlines of the newspapers of our nation today. Here is that list again:

Father and mother are treated with contempt (Nicholas Browning shot and killed his parents February 1 and then went off with friends for the day before calling 911 that evening when he returned home)

The sojourner suffers extortion in your midst (Officials at Banjul International Airport in Gambia extort money and goods from tourist passing through their immigration check point)

the fatherless and the widow are wronged (Deadbeat Dads – pick your headlines as kids pay for dads who leave them with nothing)

You have despised my holy things, and profaned my Sabbath ("EBay draws fire over sales of holy relics" read the heading January 31, 2008 LA paper)

men slander to shed blood

men commit lewdness in your midst

men uncover their fathers' nakedness

men humble women who are unclean in their impurity.

One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife How many marriages are going bad because of this behavior? Forget statistics who here does not personally know of at least one family ruined because of this kind of behavior, if not your own, a family members, a friends or a coworker.

another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law

another defiles his sister, his father's daughter Almost every town in America has a shelter protecting women from men gone bad.

men take bribes to shed blood
you take interest and increase and make gain of your neighbors by extortion
you have forgotten me, says the Lord GOD.

What makes us think that God would take note of Israel's sin and not ours? As a culture, as citizens of the world we need to take heed to God's laws. We ignore or break them to our own peril.

One of the greatest lessons learned in life is that anything I do affects others. I cannot do anything that is just about me. Everything single thing I do effects others.

I saw an ad for some new show. The show seems designed to give you money if you will embarrass yourself in front of others. The one commercial for it has a man being if he would cheat on his wife if he knew he would never be caught? Hello, this is going to be on national TV, what do you mean she will never know, she knows his answer from the show.

He would know, the woman he cheated with would know. In time she or he might become mad or find some great advantage in sharing the fact with others. Nothing is ever done in a true vacuum. When you do something, it always affects others.

I cause suffering because I do my own thing. I want you to think about that in light of the scripture we just read. Look at the list, maybe it is not your list, but I'll bet there have been things you could add. You have done things for yourself and others have had to suffer. You have gained at someone else great loss. You took pleasure and the cost was someone's tragedy.

That is the tragedy of the scripture we read. Israel forgot God and God's laws. And the generations that followed would have to hear the voice of God spoken in anger calling them to repentance.

I have a friend who an Indian chief of the Nezperce tribe. As a boy he was taught that he could do nothing by himself. Everything he did would have consequences to the 7th generation. When he made a choice it would affect him, his son, his grandson, his great grandson, all the way to his great grandson's great grandson. If you make good choice, wise choice there were good things that became available to you. But if you chose shortcuts, if you skirted the edges trying to cheat your way ahead there were consequences there as well. Good or bad, what you did never affected just you, but the generations that were to come.

I cause suffering because I do my own thing. This is the season of Lent. Are you looking at your life and asking where you can do better? Could some of the things you have done just for you, be sacrificed so that another does not have to suffer for you?

I have been so amazingly impressed with St. Paul, with you her members. This transition we are going through from three services to two, from a contemporary service to a blended service, from times that some of you wanted to others of you having to really adjust to while there have been some complaints and some groaning, I am amazed at the willingness of so many of you to sacrifice for what you perceive is the good of the church. Thank you for doing that.

During this season of Lent do you need to look at some of the personal things in your life? Are there places where the benefits are not mutual, where you get what you want and another pays the price?

Israel had gotten to the point where every man lived just for themselves without regard or care for another or for God. God threatened to clap his hands and bring them up short if they did not reconsider and change their ways.

Why let this Lenten season pass and not avail yourself of the opportunity to consider again the things you do and how they affect the lives of others? I cause suffering because I do my own thing. May this season be a time when you can truly evaluate some portion of your life and ease the burden of others be choosing a different path in part of your life.