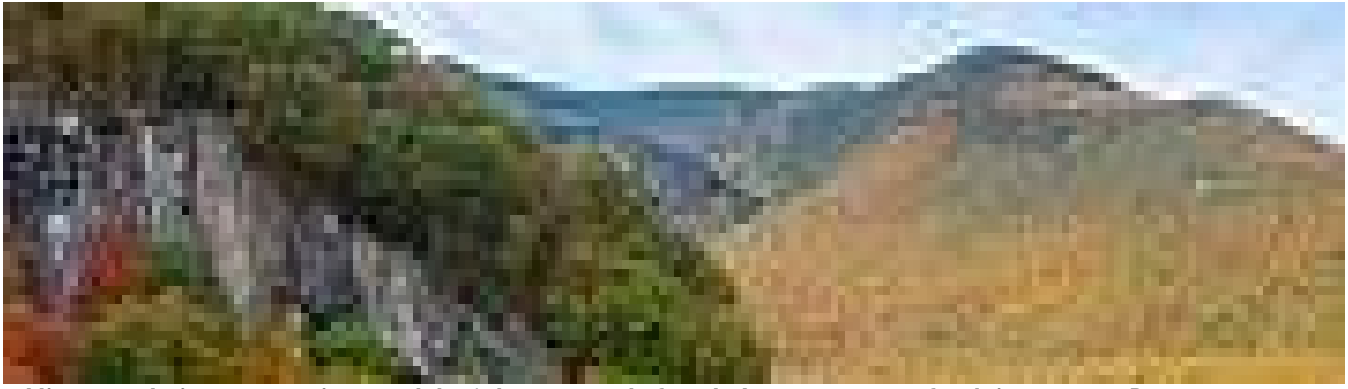


OASIS: November 6 -12, 2025: Hard Places



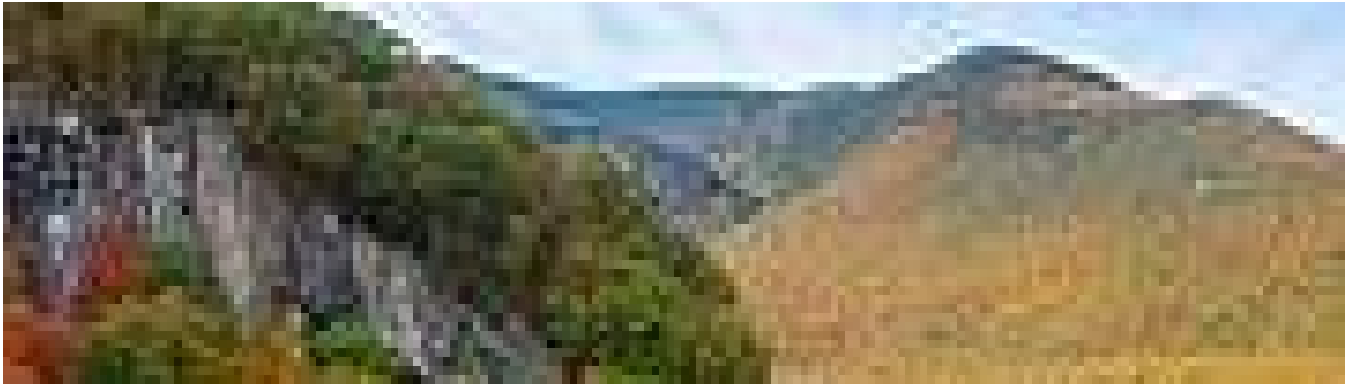
"I listen to their conversations and don't hear a word of truth. Is anyone sorry for doing wrong? Does anyone say, 'What a terrible thing I have done'? No! All are running down the path of sin as swiftly as a horse galloping into battle! Even the stork that flies across the sky knows the time of her migration, as do the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane. They all return at the proper time each year. But not my people! They do not know the LORD's laws."
Jeremiah 8:6-7 (NLT).

It is often said that a people get the kind of government that they deserve. Others say, you sleep on the bed the way you left or made it. A lot of focus had been put on the actions and behaviours of leaders and their impact on the people. But the people are not innocent by-standers. The passage above, speaks about the people though it may include leaders, but the focus seem to be on the generality of the people, their actions and behaviours. The description is very graphic, and for me it is truly descriptive of the prevalence of corruption in the world, with particular reference to Nigeria. So, my focus in this edition is on the generality of the people or the masses as they are referred to sometimes. A close examination of the behaviour of the people in most countries where there is suffering, pain, diseases, poverty, and even death, mirrors the key passage for our meditation for this week. I will be drawing most of my examples from Nigeria, the country of my birth, where the majority are dying of hunger, diseases, desperation, survival instinct, and homelessness.¹ So, as stated last week, **the leaders of the people in all works of life of Nigeria, including religious organizations, especially Christian Organizations, are corrupt – for the purpose of generalization. How about the people, are they much different? Will it not be a case of calling the dog by a bad name just to hang him? Or a case of the pot calling the kettle black, when it is both of them that are subjected to blackness from being used for cooking?**²

I visited the country recently, and stayed in a big city as well as in a small town. In both locations, I observed acts of opportunism, deceit, exploitation, stealing, lying, in addition to clear laziness, among other ills and corrupt practices that are attributed to leaders. Some may argue that the people learnt these negative actions and behaviours from the leaders, but wait a minute, in a democracy? Isn't it a basic principle of democracy that the people are to hold leaders accountable?³ But how can you hold another person accountable when you are doing exactly the same things, or you are the conveyor belt for the evil actions of the person you want to hold accountable?⁴ I love the Bible, because not only does it provide the Blue-Print for Right Living, but it also shows how the Almighty God, the Creator of the universe deals with His creation.⁵ When He gave the instruction of acceptable behaviour to Adam,⁶ Eve who was not directly given the instruction was not excused for flouting the instruction.⁷ This has been the pattern over the years. When He gave the laws in the wilderness, He instructed Moses to teach these laws to the leaders as well as the people.⁸ Each category of people were properly instructed on the expectations of God. When the nations of Israel in Bible time failed, God punished the leaders as well as the people. It could have been argued that given the seemingly total authority and power of the Kings, it is kings alone that should be punished, but not so.⁹ The Priests, Prophets, and Levites were there to teach the people the expectations of God.¹⁰ Human nations have adopted this principle, where as a matter of operation, the law does not excuse crime based on ignorance.

So, the people of Nigeria, and the world in general who practice all forms of evils, claiming that they have not much choice, are only deceiving themselves. We all have choices and make decisions based on them, though sometimes we can be constrained and put in very tight corners. Such situations, however, are only the exceptions and not the rule. The passage of interest for us today says that the people lived a life of lies and other sins for which they do not repent because they do not consider their actions wrong. And this is generally because they do not know the law of God. Not knowing the law of God does not mean intellectual knowledge, but a belief and practice of the law. Nigeria must be one of the fastest growing countries for religious activities, especially Church activities. The churches can boast of thousands of members who are committed to the activities of their churches. Yet, the rate of corruption in the country is on the increase. And if we examine the perpetrators of

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corruption in the country, one may find that those who are members of churches are equally represented in the numbers.¹¹ So, the question is, to what are they devoted? What do they attend church programmes for, from Sunday to Sunday? What are they being taught at these programmes and all the gatherings that the churches hold so regularly and frequently? Is it not true that it can be said that some people live their lives in the churches even though they are not the pastors or leaders of the churches? Many more of such questions can be asked? The point, however, is that the product or output of the Church as we have it today bears no resemblance to what Jesus Christ the head of the Church laid down for practice. It is also not in any way close to the pattern that the Apostles, including Apostle Paul, who was converted later displayed.¹² The majority of the people in churches today can be said not to know the God that they claim to serve. Yes, the people may claim to be following the pattern set for them by their leaders, who are pursuing materialism and fame to the disregard and detriment of the Gospel, but it is still a choice. **The people gravitate to these churches because they are fed with what they want.**¹³ **Every true Christian is charged to study and know the Word of God so that they would be acceptable by God. They are also to study in order to know and practice what is acceptable to God.**¹⁴ **Moreover, even without reading the Bible what should be known of the Almighty God are clearly revealed and evidenced in nature and creation.**¹⁵

If people became Christians because they made a determined and deliberate decision to obey Jesus Christ instead of human leaders, they would know that most of their leaders are liars, cheats, deceivers, and generally corrupt, who should not be the example to follow in the things of God.¹⁶ But the truth is that most of the people know that their leaders are corrupt, but have accepted them as a pattern to follow, so as to have an excuse for their evil actions. They are like the people described in the Bible, ***“the prophets give false prophecies, and the priests rule with an iron hand. Worse yet, my people like it that way!”***¹⁷ In the verses that precede the key verses, it is stated that the people are stubborn as they refuse to repent and return to the Almighty God. And this is a deliberate action, based on their belief that they are wise.¹⁸ Try and challenge or ask anyone with less than acceptable moral and ethical behaviour in Nigeria, you will hear the retort “it is the system”, “we have to survive” or “what do you expect me to do in this situation?” These answers could sway you to normalize their behaviour, without the true fear and knowledge of the Almighty God. **But NO! nothing justifies wrong-doing, even the one you were forced to do as it sometimes happens. The people are not helpless, neither are they innocent. They are making deliberate choices because of the benefits of such choices.**¹⁹ **Consequently, they should not complain of the Hard Places their choices have created, and will continue to create. Worse still, they should be ready for the punishment that is coming from the Almighty God, especially those who call themselves Christians, but live godless lives.**²⁰ While the actions of leaders may provide an easy pattern to follow, there is nothing saying that those negative patterns should be copied and followed. In the midst of the rot among the leaders in Nigeria, there are still a few that are upright and do not participate in the corruption that is prevalent. Such leaders should be the example, not to be disdained and regarded as foolish. They are the little light and hope remaining in the country, and would soon go back to their Creator from Whom they will receive the reward of faithfulness and obedience.²¹

Have a Blessed, God-Centred, and Victorious Week.

Further & Daily Readings: Jer. 8:3-17; 1. Ezek. 34:2-6; 2. Matt. 7:3-5; 3. The Leviathan; 4. Isaiah 1:3-4;10:1-2; Matt. 3:7-10; 5. Deut. 6:1-9; Psalm.19; 2Tim.3:16-17; 6. Gen.2:15-17; 7. Gen. 3:1-6, 16; 8.Exodus 19-20:18; Deut.30:9-20; 9.2Kings 17:6-23; 24:15-17; 10. Deut.31,24-30; Neh.8:7-8; Mal.2:7; 11. Isaiah 57:3- 9; 12. John 13:13-17; Acts 20:18-21; 1Pet.5:1-4; 2Pet.11:12-21; 13:2Tim.4:3-4; 14. 2Tim.2:14-17; 3:16-17; 15. Psalm 19; 16.Micah 7:3-4; 2Pet.2:1-6, 10-21; 17. Jer.5:30-31; 18.Jer.8:4-5, 8a;Rom.1:18-25; 19.2Tim.3:1-7; 4:3-4; 20.2Cor.5:10; 21.2Tim.4:6-8.