

## **"JEREMIAH, WALK THRU THE BIBLE."**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

**June 8, 2025, 6:00 pm**

**Text for Sermon: Jeremiah 1:1-10; 29:10-11; 31:33**

### **Introduction.**

Following the reign of King Solomon, Israel began a long slide into idolatry and covenant breaking. Despite the occasional attempts of some righteous like Hezekiah and Josiah who instituted great reforms, and the constant warnings of many of God's prophets, the decline of Israel continues on an irreversible path toward judgment. It ends with the ultimate destruction of all the visible, tangible evidences of God's covenant relationship and His presence with His people, such as the holy city of Jerusalem and the temple, the throne of David and dwelling in the Promised Land.

Isaiah and Jeremiah loom before us like twin peaks in the mountain range of the prophets who were the servants of God who delivered the message of God as final warnings.

A prophet is a person who tells us who God is and what He is like and what He is saying and what He is doing. And a prophet is someone who tells us who we are and what we are doing.

### **The Book**

Who is Jeremiah? Jeremiah was the son of a priest, but instead of becoming a priest, he was called by God to be a prophet at the age 20, about 60 years after Isaiah.

He prophesied during the reigns of the last five Kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Assyria had conquered the northern Kingdom of Israel a hundred years before Jeremiah began to prophesy.

He prophesied for 40 years during which time Judah was threatened first by Assyrian, then Egypt until the fall of Judah to Babylon at the end of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry in 586 BC.

Try to imagine warning a child about dangers ahead and the consequences of terrible decisions, and watching all your warning go unheeded, ignored, even despised, and then witnessing everything you warned coming to pass.

As we see in Jeremiah's call to ministry in chapter one, he is called *the reluctant prophet*.

Before Jeremiah knew God, God knew Jeremiah. Before Jeremiah was born, God knew Jeremiah and had his life planned. Before Jeremiah was interested in God, God was interested in Jeremiah. Before we ever considered that God might be important, we were important to God.

Our life doesn't start with us, our salvation doesn't start with us. By the time we enter into existence we are already ancient history. Over six thousand years old.

We don't make ourselves, there are no self-made men. "He has done well for himself." Our self is given to us. What do we have that we have not received.

God asked Jeremiah to do something he couldn't do. So Jeremiah declined the offer. Like Moses he felt totally inadequate.

**Deuteronomy 18:18** I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

**Jeremiah 1:9-10** Then the Lord put out His hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, "Now I have put My words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

When God calls us to Himself and gives us work to do, don't say:

I am only a youth.

I am only a college kid.

I only have an eighth-grade education.

I am only a housewife.

I am only an employee.

I am only a layman.

I don't have enough training or confidence or Bible knowledge or time.

Besides being called the reluctant prophet he was also *the weeping prophet* which made him the most human prophet. His humanity comes out in the book which has more autobiographical information than any of the other prophetic writings. Jeremiah was a heart-broken prophet with a heart-breaking message. "He was a weeping prophet to a wayward people."

He was hugely unpopular, despised by everyone and lonely. He was branded a traitor for telling the people to surrender unconditionally to Babylon. His spirit almost broke and he gave way to anger, depression and to despair that was nearly suicidal. In the face of opposition and death, he never wavered, but was courageous to the end.

### **The Purpose and theme.**

**Jeremiah 1:16** And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.

**Jeremiah 22:9** They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and worshiped other gods and served them.

The purpose of Jeremiah is clearly and simply stated. God is bringing judgment against Judah. It will come in the form of an invasion from the north by the army of Babylon. It will come in the near future and it will be justly deserved. Judah has been committing idolatry for a very long time. God's longsuffering patience is coming to an end.

God brings His case against Judah and announcements His judgment. They are worshipping idols that their own hands have made which is utter folly, stupidity. They are brazenly committing adultery against their own God with no shame. God's bride, made by Him, having His own name, is being unfaithful.

Judah had declined morally into the worst kinds of idolatry, sacrificing their children to foreign gods, practicing human sacrifices.

Should God act? Should God deal with the injustice? Should God reject His own people?

Lest anyone think God's wrath and judgment are unfair or unjust, remember God had warned Israel from the beginning 900 years before, and then repeatedly through many prophets.

**I Peter 4:17** For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Jeremiah spoke more about repentance than any other writing prophet. Once it became clear that the people would not repent Judah was doomed, and that this doom was Yahweh's righteous judgment upon them for their sins and unrighteousness. The Babylonian captivity would be the direct result of God's judgment, and not a sign of God's powerlessness.

This is what happens when a people know God and then deliberately turn away from Him. Israel had a false hope that God would never break His covenant. Jeremiah has sent to break that false hope. Judah thought because they had the covenant and the temple they were safe. God is not interested in externals, but in the heart, a circumcised heart. Jeremiah emphasizes the priority of the spiritual over the temporal.

Jeremiah's prophecy consists of *three main points*:

*First*, he declares the coming destruction. God's people have sinned grievously against the Lord. There was no humility or repentance, even when threatened by outside powers. Total disregard for God's commandments.

*Second*, the Lord will judge his people for their sin, in this case through the onslaught of the Babylonians who will destroy all the visible, tangible evidences of God's presence with them.

They loved the temple and they loved their sin. They said they loved God and they loved their idols. They abandoned the Word of God through false preachers, teachers and prophets.

Yet, *third*, God is both unfailingly faithful and bountifully merciful and will bring restoration and salvation. God will once again redeem His people and bring them back to Him; and forgive their sins, and make with them a *new covenant*, writing its laws on their hearts.

Jeremiah is where the largest gold nugget of hope ever found is located (Jer. 31:31-34). Or maybe we should call it the Hope Diamond.

### *The New Covenant*

This new covenant is not like getting a new car to replace the old, worn out one. This new covenant is of an entirely different sort. Something the world has never seen before. It is entirely new because the person behind it is entirely new and different.

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.

33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Jeremiah observes that the human heart is deceitful (17:9). Only a new covenant will remedy their open idolatry and corruption. This covenant is initiated by YW and He will be their God and they will be His people (31:31-34). Note four things about this new covenant:

1. It is more personal than the marital contract which Israel broke (31:32)
2. It is written on their hearts, not stone tablets (v.33)
3. It results in the true knowledge of God, the new torah of full obedience and rich obedience without the need of human teaching (v.34).
4. It carried full forgiveness of the sins that have earned the judgment.

**Hebrews 8:6** Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

Jesus ushers in new covenant

## Jesus

The Gospel According to Jeremiah: Against the dark background of judgment God has given Jeremiah a vision of the glorious Messiah.

Christ is presented as: the fountain of living water (2:13); the great physician (8:22); the balm of Gilead (8:22); the good shepherd (23:4); a righteous branch (23:5); the Lord our righteousness (23:6); David the King (30:9); and the Redeemer (50:34).

**Jeremiah 23:4-6** I will set *shepherds* over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord. 5 Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up *for David a righteous Branch*, and he shall reign *as king and deal wisely*, and shall *execute justice and righteousness* in the land. 6 In his days *Judah will be saved*, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: '*The Lord is our righteousness.*'

**Jeremiah 33:14-18** "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at

that time I will cause a *righteous Branch to spring up for David*, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’

17 “For thus says the Lord: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, 18 and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.”

The opposition, suffering and rejection of God’s prophet Jeremiah embody and reflect the message of the suffering servant who suffers in connection with the redemption of His people.

- Both were very conscious of their call from God.
- Both condemned the commercialism of temple worship in their day (7:11; Matt. 21:13).
- Their enemies charged both of them with political treason.
- Both experienced persecutions, trials, and imprisonments.
- Both foretold the destruction of the temple (7:14; Mark 13:2).
- Both wept over Jerusalem (9:1; Luke 19:41).
- Both condemned the priests of their day.
- Both experienced rejection by members of their own families (12:6; John 1:11).
- Both were so tenderhearted that some Jewish leaders identified them with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.
- Both loved Israel deeply.

Jesus perfectly fulfills His role as the perfectly faithful obedience fulfillment of the covenant. And He had to pay the price, be the sacrifice, endure all the wrath and judgment.

Jesus pointed to the words of Jeremiah when He established the sacrament of the Lord’s Table. “And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many” (Mk. 14:24).

Jeremiah leads us to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a people of the new covenant. We’re experiencing the promises made so long ago. And yet, we continue to wait and hope. Along with the exiles in Babylon, we live in a foreign land as sojourners.

### **Implications and application.**

Consider the kindness and the severity of God. God is good and God is just, merciful and holy.

He disciplines His children out of the purity of His love.

There are at least three abiding lessons from this book:

**First**, sin brings destruction. Sin brings with it its own punishment and destruction. **Second**, sin wounds the heart of God. He weeps over the doom of a city and its people. He does not delight in bringing devastation and ruin, and neither should His servants. **Third**, the ultimate victory is with God. He will remake the vessel that He destroyed because of its flaws. The stump of David's line will sprout again. Though the last Davidic king died in exile, God promised that another Davidic King would emerge (23:5; 30:9). There was hope of a new covenant to come, and enabling grace, that would replace the old covenant—that no one kept except Jesus (31:31-34) (Thomas Constable).

## **Exile.**

Exile is traumatic and terrifying. Can you imagine exile? Can you imagine being a refugee? Can you enter into the feelings and thoughts of someone forcibly, maybe even violently transported far from all that is familiar and safe?

Put aside all political considerations for a moment and enter into the mind of someone walking from Venezuela across the Darien gap, across Panama and Mexico to the United States. Three thousand miles.

Imagine being displaced into a refugee camp in Africa. There are over 100 million forcibly displaced people in the world. Exiles of one sort or another.

The people of God were uprooted from where they were born and taken from the land that was promised them and forced 700 miles across the Middle Eastern desert to a strange land with strange customs and religion, to Babylon. Everything familiar and safe, gone. The food is weird, the weather is hot, the people are immoral, the language completely foreign.

The essential meaning of exile is we are where we don't want to be. And that can happen if we never change addresses. Our country and world around us can change. Something familiar to us in life is ripped away from us. Dislocation, illness, accident, job loss, divorce, death.

How then shall we live in exile? We live amidst the ruins of Western civilization.

## ***Three models for living in a post-Christian culture.***

The ***Benedict Option*** is a strategy model after the sixth-century monk St. Benedict, who set up separate religious communities as the Roman empire collapsed around them. Christians need to return to the principles of monastic life, emphasizing prayer,

community, stability, and a focused life of faith, as a means of resisting the negative influences of secular culture and preserving faith in a changing world. This calls for a communal withdrawal from the mainstream, for the sake of sheltering one's faith and family from corrosive modernity and cultivating a more traditional way of life.

The ***Boniface Option*** is a strategy which advocates for Christian counteroffensive in a "post-Christian." It encourages individuals to confront and resist the perceived negative aspects of modern society, drawing inspiration from St. Boniface's actions in converting pagan populations in Europe. This involves directly confronting the world and its values, refusing to be dominated by it, but to fight it.

The third option is the ***Jeremiah Option***. Rather than pessimistically withdraw from the world, the Jeremiah Option cultivates a relationship between faith and culture and suggests engaging with and promoting the welfare of the surrounding culture while retaining one's faith.

But this does not require the spiritual or cultural conversion of the Babylonians.

**Jeremiah 29:4-7** Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

You may not like it but make yourself at home. Settle in. Build a house, make the best of it. Plant gardens, become productive. Learn some Babylonian recipes. Do life, get married, have kids. Seek the welfare and peace of those around you and pray for them. Seek shalom and pray. Pray means don't accept everything on their own terms, but on God's terms. Pray, seek His wisdom and will.

Don't sit around feeling sorry for yourself. Stop sitting around feeling sorry for yourself and complaining about all that is wrong with the world. Start being human right where you are. Be salt and light. Reflect Christ. We are not only called to be pilgrims, but also to be ambassadors.