

## **Jeremiah - the Weeping Prophet**

### **Review**

Over the last seven weeks, we have done a quick journey, looking at major people in the Bible who were forerunners of Jesus. It began with the father of faith Abraham; then the struggling Jacob, the founder of the nation; Joseph, the leader through exile; Moses, the settler into the new nation; Joshua, the Kingship of David; the faithful prophet Elijah, and now today we are with the weeping prophet, Jeremiah. Each of these men represents a specific genre and time period in the life of the nation of Israel and each pointed to the coming of Christ. They were preparing the way for one greater.

Today in the first chapter of Jeremiah we have some valuable lessons to learn. For the Bible speaks to every generation.

### **Firstly, who are you?**

This is a great question for us as Christians. Who are we?

Well, let us consider Jeremiah – who did he see himself as?

v6 *“Alas Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am too young”* He saw himself as a young fearful man called to an enormous task. That is how he saw himself...

Immediately we see that he is looking deep inside his soul and he doesn't measure up to the task in front of him.

### **But how did God see him?**

V4, *“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”*

On this day when we celebrate Mothers' Day, we find here that this young man is told that even before he was in his mother's womb, God knew him.

In Psalm 139, we hear a similar thought: v15, *“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body, all*

*the days ordained for me were written in your book, before one of them came to be."*

The Bible tells us that God knows us before we are born. We are no accident. His love is eternal and we are part of his eternal plan.

Jesus also reminded us of who God knew him to be – His precious Son.

Does this bring comfort to you today, that God knows you before you were even born? It's wonderful to grasp this great truth, that you are loved into existence, that God knows us long before we enter this world, who we are, and the Word that comes from God is this....*God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son ...*Jeremiah was told, *I knew you before you were born.*

The verb 'know' has much more meaning than simply being aware of somebody. It carries the idea of recognition of the worth and purpose of him who is known. God knew Jeremiah, chose Jeremiah, and appointed Jeremiah. He was known by name, hand-picked by God, and commissioned to serve.

Those acts of God give one a great sense of purpose. The promise of God's purpose allows us to let go of our own plans and to receive God's plan without fear. Like Jeremiah and Jesus, and countless people throughout history, we need to accept that our future is not our own. We are God's. He has a distinct plan and purpose for our lives.

### **What has God called you to do?**

What I love about this passage is that it is very human because we all get frightened by the task that God has set for us. Think of the Christian martyrs...men like Martin Luther King, did he want to suffer for the task that God called him to do. I'm sure not, but it was the path that would bring hope to many people. No one gets it easy. Life can be very difficult.

Throughout Scripture we discover that many of the great people, when asked to serve God, looked for an excuse why they shouldn't be part of God's plan.

Jeremiah had excuses ready when God called him to be a prophet. His excuses are often our excuses for not heeding God's voice when he calls. But countering each excuse was a promise from God.

### **What is His promise?**

Jeremiah was called to be "a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5), not a priest like his father and his grandfather. A prophet was a chosen and authorised spokesman for God, who declared God's Word to the people.

We often think of prophets as people who can tell the future. But a prophet spoke uncomfortable messages to the present situation that had future ramifications.

Nobody really likes to hear the truth. A prophet was often like a social commentator, pointing out directly what would happen if the nation did not turn to God. He was like a news reader; the only difference was that at the end of his news bulletin, he would add a personal challenge for them to turn to God or else disaster was coming.

Jeremiah spoke in word pictures...He said, *"I see a pot that is boiling. It is tilting towards us from the north."* He was telling them, that the Babylonian army is on its way...to destroy them. Jesus, too, was called to be a prophet. In our reading from the Gospel today, we discover that God gave his only Son, "to be the light of the world" but we are told that "people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." 3v19.

Like Jeremiah, Jesus spoke directly to the hearts of people. Most did not accept his message of repentance, for they did not want to change.

When I look back on my life, the last thing that I thought I would be was a preacher. It was not in my thinking and yet God's hand was upon me and guided me into the ministry. I had many questions like Jeremiah and yet there was a simple trust that this is what God had in store for me. He promised to be with me throughout the journey.

Perhaps today you can also relate to this, as you serve the Lord, you didn't expect to do the things that you are doing and you also perhaps had lots of excuses and yet God's hand was upon you.

## **The Promise**

What God says through us may be challenging and at times painful to hear, but God gives us the strength to endure. We have the promise of God's prevailing. V18 *"Today, I am the One who has made you a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land - against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the population. They will fight against you but never prevail over you, since I am with you to rescue you"* (Jer. 1:18-19).

Notice the architectural terms: a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls. They are solid and unshakeable like the God who conceived them, and the prophet who they would come to characterise. God reassured Jeremiah: Attack you they will; overcome you they can't.

The person who stands with God will prevail. Someone once said: *"One with God is a majority."* Alone we are helpless. With God we prevail.

Has God called you to serve him and that may take all different types of service? Then he will fulfil his purpose in your life, he will equip you, he will enable you, he will protect you, he will accompany you.

Are you obeying his commands? Then he is with you to protect you. Are you sharing His word? Then he will accomplish his purposes no matter how the people respond.

Go forward today, as Jeremiah and Jesus went forward, trusting in the one who will not leave you or abandon you but will be with you each step of the way.

Amen