

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Dear Friends in Christ,

Jeremiah's call to serve the Lord as His prophet was from 627 B.C. to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. - 41 years. His ministry would start at the time of the great reformer king Josiah. Josiah worked to move the Kingdom of Judah back to God-pleasing worship and life. It was a God blessed time. After Josiah, Jeremiah's ministry continued through a series of kings who, as Scriptures state, "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord," and, finally, through the horror of the Babylonian captivity.

When I read the books of *Jeremiah* and *Lamentations*, my thoughts are drawn to the first 12 words of the 119 words of the first sentence of Charles Dickens', "A Tale of Two Cities." Here is the first sentence:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of unbelief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of the noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or evil, in the superlative degree of comparison.

Those words made their appearance in 1859. They could describe the time of Jeremiah. They could describe the recent past and present. So, the question we might ask is . . .

WHAT DOES JEREMIAH HAVE TO DO WITH US?

I. Known.

Jeremiah wrote,

Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." (vv.4-5)

It's rather simple. God knew you and me before we were formed; before we were conceived. The Holy Spirit had Paul write, "(God)...chose us in him before the foundation of the world (before creation), that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." (Eph. 1:4-5)

And think on these words of David: "Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust in you at my mother's breasts. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God." (Ps. 22:9-10) God had those words recorded, not for us to admire the love of God for David, but to understand his love for you and me who were chosen by Him "before the foundation of the world."

We also have been consecrated, that is, set apart to be God's holy people through faith in Christ. And we have been appointed, not to be Prophets as Jeremiah, but to be witnesses who reveal the love of Christ to others. The verses of Scripture I have placed before us from the beginning of the sermon to this point are verses we need to keep in our hearts as we walk through a world that rants against the Christ, yet unravels at its very foundation, and will continue to rant and unravel until it sees and hears, as Scriptures teach, "... the Lord...will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet sound of God." (I Thess. 4:16)

Jeremiah goes on to write...

II. Sent.

Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord." (vv.6-8)

Brothers and sisters, again, I know we are not a Jeremiah, but we have been sent. As in the case of Jeremiah, we are commanded to proclaim God's warnings and the love of God in Christ. To do this until that moment when this world's constant, miserable turbulence is forever silenced!

And it would be wise to remember what happened at the beginning of the New Testament Church, right after the disciple Stephen, described as one "full of grace and power", was stoned to death for giving a powerful and honest witness to Jesus: "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." (Acts 8:1) God allowed the persecution. He used it to send the church to new places, as we read, "Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word." (Acts 8:4) Preaching forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life through Christ.

17th to 18th century minister and author, Matthew Henry wrote:

Though a sense of our own weakness and insufficiency should make us go humbly about our work, yet it should not make us draw back from it when God calls us to it...Samuel delivered a message from God to Eli, when he was a little child. Note, God can, when he pleases, make little children prophets, and *ordain strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings*. (MATTHEW HENRY'S COMMENTARY *On the Whole Bible*, Vol. 4, Isaiah to Malachi, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Mass, 1991, p. 316)

III. Set.

Our text reports these words of Jeremiah . . .

Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." (vv.9-10)

You're right! We have not been "set" over nations and kingdoms the same way Jeremiah was set. But we have been "set", **put** in the position of proclaiming the Word of God to others. And we are to remember the words of Scripture: "...for (the gospel) is the power of God for salvation." (Rom. 1:16) Recall these words of Jesus: "It is the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) who gives life (that is, eternal life); the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (Jn. 6:63) That word is the Gospel!

Jesus, the Word made flesh, left us the written and visible Word. As has been stated many times, whenever His Word is present, so is the Holy Spirit. Thus, and again, as Paul writes, "... (the gospel) is the power of God for salvation." It is the Word that convicts us of sin. It is the Word that promises Jesus has paid for every sin with His blood. It is the Word that washed away our sins in Baptism. It is the Word that feeds us forgiveness in the Lord's Supper.

When the Word of God comes out of our mouths it “sets”, or **puts** us in in a position similar to Jeremiah. If, by the power of the Holy Spirit, a person is brought to faith that person has been “plucked up” from unending death to eternal life. If the person rejects they will be “overthrown”.

The message God gave to Jeremiah was met with hard opposition by those in power. There were times when they went after Jeremiah. What he experienced is what Jesus said and has been quoted here a good number of times: “...(the world) hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.” (Jn. 7:7) But that doesn’t change the mission and the message God’s people can give to those hurting and fearful of what’s coming on this world; fearful of the grave, fearful of what’s on the other side.

So, here we are, still struggling with sin, often hit with terrible guilt, and, maybe, wondering if God will go on forgiving us. As Paul stated, “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” (Rm. :15) And Paul’s cry is ours: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” And Paul’s answer is ours: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ out Lord!” (Rm. 7:24,25) Luther wrote: “God does not give grace freely in the sense that He will demand no satisfaction, but He gave Christ to be the satisfaction for us.”

So, *What Does Jeremiah Have To Do With Us?* Everything regarding our lovingly reaching into the lives of others who are afraid and searching. “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2b). Now.

Amen.

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- I. Known.
- II. Sent.
- III. Set.

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