

CbC to Oct 24

October 18 Su Reading B291 — Jeremiah 1 — Only a Youth

Audio: [Jeremiah 1 \(ESV\)](#)

God With Us — Jeremiah was a disadvantaged prophet. Although he was a priest, he was not connected to the religious leadership in Jerusalem. He was from Anathoth, one of the four villages in Benjamin given to the priestly clan. He also felt the disadvantage that when God called him, he was “*only a youth*” (v. 6), still living at home with his parents. The third handicap was that his message would not be accepted by the people (v. 19). On the other hand, he had the one great advantage that God promised him twice: “*I will be with you*” (vv. 8, 19). The first time that was said, it was in the context of Jeremiah being afraid that people would not listen to him because of his youth (v. 8). That was the fear of *disrespect*. Do you sometimes fear that others will not listen to your testimony because you don’t know enough about the Bible or that you won’t be able to answer their questions? Remember that God is “*with you*” as He was with Jeremiah. He will give you the words and the answers you need at that time. Jeremiah’s second fear was that of *opposition*: “*They will fight against you*” (v. 19). Disrespect would escalate into hostility. The same “*I am with you*” answer is given to him by God in that context of resistance. Some people we speak to about Christ might also respond to us with attacking anger. Ridicule and name-calling are common. We should expect it at times but also remember that God has also promised “*to deliver you*” (v. 19) from their attacks.

October 19 M Reading B292 — Jeremiah 2 — Self-sufficient Ignorance

Audio: [Jeremiah 2 \(ESV\)](#)

One or the Other — The next several chapters of Jeremiah concentrate on the many ways Judah and Israel rejected God. I was struck by several statements in this chapter made by God’s people in defense of their waywardness. First was something they did not do that they should have done. They said, “*Where is the LORD...?*” (vv. 6, 8), but they did not call upon Him for their wisdom and strength. Then came their negative statements of defense. After God had freed them from the bondage of Egypt, their response to Him was, “*I will not serve*” (v. 20). They falsely thought they could handle things on their own and declared, “*We are free*” (v. 31). In this so-called freedom, they went after false gods, like Baal, while declaring, “*I am not unclean*” (v. 23), “*I am innocent*” (v. 35), and “*I have not sinned*” (v. 35). Their shifted allegiance didn’t work out well, however, so when they did get into trouble, they cried out to God, “*Arise and save us!*” (v. 27). Like many people today, they wanted both their sin and their Savior.

October 20 Tu Reading B293 — Jeremiah 3 — Taking Whoredom Lightly

Audio: [Jeremiah 3 \(ESV\)](#)

Return! — This chapter contains another sweep through the history of God’s people. It goes back to when Jeroboam led the northern tribes of Israel away from Judah and quickly lapsed into idolatry. Israel’s unfaithfulness was with idols, i.e., “*committing adultery with stone and wood*” (v. 9). Judah witnessed their rebellion for 140 years and saw how God “divorced” those people, dispersing them into Assyrian lands. Surely Judah should have learned from her sister’s mistakes, but no, she followed in similar steps of rebellion and would end up in Babylonian exile. We see evidence here that, as good as King Josiah’s reform was, even reaching into Israel (v. 6), perhaps most of the people didn’t follow his godly lead. The first verse asks the question that if a husband sent away his adulterous wife, would he ever want to take her back again? Yet, a merciful God would (v. 12). What a human husband wouldn’t forgive, a Divine Husband would receive back. Eight times in this chapter the word “*return*” is used. God called out, “*Return, faithless Israel*” (v. 12), and “*Return, O faithless children*” (v. 14). We need to hear the echo of that call in our minds when we fall into sin. Our Merciful Husband wants us to return.

Avoiding Judgment — Judgment was coming to Judah through Babylon. The text says, “*from the north*” (v. 6), which was the fertile route the Babylonians would take from the east rather than going west through the desert. God said that this “*lion*” was coming “*to make your land a waste*” (v. 7). It was His judgment on Judah “*because she has rebelled against me ... Your ways and your deeds have brought this upon you*” (vv. 17-18). Throughout this warning of judgment, however, there are still calls for repentance from a merciful God. The chapter begins with a series of “*if you...*” repentance statements followed by a “*...then*” promise of blessing (vv. 1-2). They were challenged to circumcise their hearts (v. 4) and to wash their hearts “*that you may be saved*” (v. 14). God concluded His promise of judgment with this hopeful statement: “*...yet I will not make a full end*” (v. 27). This is the heart of a heavenly parent reluctantly having to punish His children. It is so much better for us to wash our hearts from evil deeds through humble and genuine confession and repentance than to have to go through the painful means of discipline that prods us toward obedience and devotion.

Repentance or Discipline — This is yet another chapter predicting coming judgment for Judah’s sins. It is interesting that it begins with a futile search for a righteous person in Jerusalem: “*Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth*” (v. 1). Then, near the end, only this was discovered: “*...wicked men are found among my people*” (v. 26). The rare, righteous Jeremiah said, “*I will go to the great and will speak to them, for they know the way of the LORD*” (v. 5), but what he found was that they, too, had rebelled against God. These people deserved God’s punishment because they refused to repent (v. 3) of their many transgressions (v. 6), their worship of false gods (v. 7), their lust after their neighbor’s wife (v. 8), and thinking they were immune to penalty (v. 12) while maintaining a rebellious heart (v. 23). God would use Babylon to apply His punishment, making them trudge almost 900 miles (1,450 km) to live in exile for 70 years. It was discipline but not annihilation, however, because God promised, “*I will not make a full end of you*” (v. 18). Many of those people *did* learn from that severe lesson and turned back to the Lord, as we will read later. Israel still struggles today with a wholehearted devotion to Yahweh, and so do we. The lesson for all of us is that repentance is less difficult than discipline.

Walking Obediently — God warned that disaster for Jerusalem was getting closer. He presented four reasons for His judgment against them, each coming just before the word “*therefore*” introduced the punishments (vv. 11, 15, 18, 21). The first reason was because they had rejected God’s Word: “*...the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn ... therefore...*” (vv. 10-11). They had heard the truth, but they rejected it, so God’s wrath would come. The second reason was that their spiritual leaders were not ashamed of their personal greed and their false assurance of peace (vv. 13-14). The prophets and priests were stealing from the people and telling them what they wanted to hear. The third reason for their punishment was because they rejected the good way that had been pointed out to them from Moses (vv. 16-17). They refused to walk the path of righteousness, so disaster would fall on them (v. 19). The fourth reason was because of their shallow worship practices. God did not accept their incense and sacrifices because their hearts were not into it; they were not really worshiping God (v. 20). All these reasons point to a lack of obedience, which also serves as a warning to us. Walk in His ways!

Repentance and Worship — It is significant that God told Jeremiah to declare this message to people entering the temple precincts because their worship was distorted and corrupted. The message had two parts. The first one was about repentance: “*Amend your ways and your deeds*” (vv. 3, 5). They were committing deeds of injustice and oppression toward the disadvantaged (vv. 5-6). They were murdering, committing adultery, and swearing falsely (v. 8). The word “*amend*” carries two ideas: something needing to be changed and to be corrected. It is another word for “repent,” meaning to stop going in one negative direction and start going in the opposite, positive direction. God’s message of repentance continues strongly in the message of the New Testament and applies to us today. Stop doing wrong and start doing right! The second part of Jeremiah’s message was about false worship, which is why he delivered it at the gate of the temple (v. 1). One of the peoples’ worship faults was that they trusted the *building* to protect them. They repeatedly chanted “*This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD*” (v. 4). It was a futile ritual that accomplished nothing. Their second worship fault was that they continued in their ritual worship of Yahweh, thinking they could still “*go on doing all these abominations*” (v. 10). That abuse of grace is still found among many Christians today. Judah’s third worship fault was that they thought they could safely worship Yahweh along with other gods. They would “*make cakes for the queen of heaven ... [and] pour out drink offerings to other gods*” (v. 18) and even “*burn their sons and their daughters in the fire*” (v. 31). There are even some churchgoers today who murder their children through abortion because they think that raising them would be an inconvenience. All of this is an abomination to God.