

Chosen For a Time Like This

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So this morning, if you have a bible, turn with me to Jeremiah Chapter 1. Jeremiah Chapter 1. Found on pages 533 or 612. Jeremiah Chapter 1. And it reads:

The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.

***The word of the Lord came to me, saying,
“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.”

***“Alas, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”
But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord.***

Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you see, Jeremiah?”

“I see the branch of an almond tree,” I replied.

The Lord said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.”

The word of the Lord came to me again: “What do you see?”

“I see a pot that is boiling,” I answered. “It is tilting toward us from the north.”

The Lord said to me, “From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms,” declares the Lord.

***“Their kings will come and set up their thrones
in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem;
they will come against all her surrounding walls
and against all the towns of Judah.***

***I will pronounce my judgments on my people
because of their wickedness in forsaking me,
in burning incense to other gods***

and in worshiping what their hands have made.

“Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord.

Let us pray.

[praying]

Heavenly Father, thank You for this beautiful day that You made. And God, as I prepare to speak Your word to Your people, God, as Jeremiah, God, may I be the mouthpiece, and Father God, may we be receptive to what You have in store for us. I pray for all these things, in Jesus' name I pray, amen.

In the bible, God commanded His people that when they set up kings over themselves, that he was to listen to the commandments of the Lord his God, and to walk in His ways, and to encourage and lead people into the ways of the Lord. That's found in Deuteronomy Chapter 17. The name of the first king over Israel was Saul, and after Saul came David, and after David, his son, Solomon. Under the rulership of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, the kingdom of Israel was split, leaving Israel in the northern region and Judah in the southern region. The bible goes on to tell us that in the southern kingdom of Judah, some of the kings did what was right in the sight of the Lord, while others did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. It was in the reign of the last five kings in the land of Judah, the reign of Josiah, that the Law of Moses was found. Josiah was one who did what was right in the sight of the Lord by destroying all of the sacred idols and turning the people back to God.

The next four kings after Josiah did what was wrong in the sight of the Lord, and they led the children of Judah astray from the covenant with God, which brings us to the message that Jeremiah would proclaim from God. The kings, priests, and the prophets all rebelled against commandments of the Lord their God by serving other gods and doing the practices of other nations. God told His people that because they broke their covenant with him, with their idolatry and injustice, He would destroy His people and bring them into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon. Jeremiah started his ministry in the land of Judah halfway through the reign of Josiah, which continued throughout the reign of Ahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. This book is written during the last five kings in the land of Judah before their exile into Babylon.

What is the theme, or the message, of the book of Jeremiah? We saw that, in Jeremiah Chapter 1 verses 13-16, where it says that because they rebelled against God's commandments, His covenant with His people that judgement was coming. The book of Jeremiah tells us what happened to the children of God who turned their backs to their Creator, and with that being said, they would be going into exile. It also tells us what happened to those who remained faithful to their God, that there is forgiveness and restoration for them. Jeremiah tells his audience that judgement would come from the hand of God if they did not turn back to Him in repentance. Called to the unhappy task of renouncing the destruction of the kingdom of Judah, Jeremiah is commissioned by God to lodge His indictment against His people and proclaim the end of an era.

Which brings us to the first three verses. The first three verses that we read in Chapter 1 were a summary, but this morning, I just want us to focus on verses 4-10. Verse 4 says:

***The word of the Lord came to me, saying,
“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.”***

(NIV)

In these verses, we see that God has commissioned Jeremiah from before the world began, that he would be a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah was born, Jeremiah was raised for a time like this. Jeremiah had a specific word that he would tell the people of Judah from God. Psalm 139 says that God knows everything about us; He knows when we were born, He knows when we sit up and when we lie down. Every word on our mouths, God knows. Jesus even went on to say that the very hairs on our heads are numbered. This is how much God knows us. At this point in his life, Jeremiah knew for a fact that God’s hand was upon his life. God knew him before he was born, and God sanctified him apart for a specific purpose. As God’s words became a reality in his life, the prophet understood that God knew him and had called him to proclaim a critical message at the crucial point in the history of the nation. But I have a question: Why does God use people to bring His message across? Because God can just come and say it Himself. The bible says that God uses people. The bible puts it this way, Romans 14 verses 7-8 says:

For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

(NIV)

God has the right to use us and call us to spread His message to other people because we are His. That being said, Jeremiah said something very interesting. In verse 6, Jeremiah said:

“Alas, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

(NIV)

Jeremiah did not see himself as the way God saw him. God saw him as a prophet to the nations, but he only saw himself as a child or youth. Jeremiah said that he was incapable of going and speaking before God’s children, but God made him His spokesperson. And I like God’s response, because if you look with me at verse 7, God says something different to Jeremiah. God said to Jeremiah, “Jeremiah, even though you’re young,” God says:

“Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.”

(NIV)

God told him not to use excuses. God wants to use our lives for His purposes if we let Him. Even when we cannot see the good in us, God sees it and He uses it for His kingdom and His glory. God is the only one who knows us more than ourselves, because we are made in His image and in His likeness. God asks us to do certain things because we have been gifted by Him for that task. In verse 8, God encourages Jeremiah. God says:

“Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord.

(NIV)

God encourages him not to be afraid, but He reminded Jeremiah that He would be with him wherever he goes, and that's the same reminder that God has for us today. God said that He would never leave us nor forsake us. In verse 18 and 19, God also says it:

“Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord.

(NIV)

So we see that God was with Jeremiah wherever he went, but God also equipped Jeremiah. Look with me at verse 9 and 10:

Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

(NIV)

God encourages Jeremiah that He would be his guide and source only if Jeremiah trusts God. God touched him and told him what to say to the people he has to speak to. God is the one who speaks to people, but He uses human beings to accomplish His purposes. God does not need human beings, but He uses us in the process to impact the life of someone else. It is important for us to understand that God equips the called. God gave Jeremiah the tools he needed to get the job done.

In verse 10, it is God's word. It is not the prophet's word, it is God's word. God is telling Jeremiah the impact that these words will have on the nations. The prophet Jeremiah is God's mouthpiece. It is important to realize that God is the one who is speaking through Jeremiah. God reminded Jeremiah that He will fulfill His words if the prophet was willing to go and speak what God has commanded him to, and we see that in verse 11:

***The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you see, Jeremiah?”
“I see the branch of an almond tree,” I replied.
The Lord said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.”***

(NIV)

In the book of Jeremiah, we see that he is often referred to as the weeping prophet. Jeremiah would tell the people what the Lord says, but no one would listen to his message. In his rejection while speaking God's word to the children of Israel, God reminded him that He would stay faithful to Jeremiah, as Jeremiah trusted God and, in his faith, remains faithful to God.

You might be asking right now, “How does this passage apply to me?” I am so happy that you asked that question. [congregation laughs] The bible says in Ephesians Chapter 2:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

(NIV)

It also says:

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

(NIV)

Jesus Christ, before He left the world, He gave us a great commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [God told Jeremiah to go, even though he was young, and God is telling us to go, whether we are young or old.] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

(NIV)

In God's kingdom, age does not matter. Whether you are five years old or on the other side [laughter], the Holy Spirit has given you gifts for the good of God's people and to be the hope in the world. God only wants to use you for His glory. I am encouraging each of you to use the gifts that God has given you to further His kingdom, to do all things for His glory. I started out this morning with a question, and to close, I just want to leave you with something to think about. Listen to these bible characters. Do you seriously think that God cannot use you? Noah got drunk. Abraham was too old. Jacob was a liar. Moses had a stuttering problem. Gideon was afraid. At one time, Rahab was a prostitute. Jeremiah and Timothy were too young. David had an affair and was a murderer. Peter denied Christ. And Martha worried about everything. 1 Peter 2 verse 9 says that:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

(NIV)

God has placed us in this community, west Edmonton, that we live, God has sent some of us to school and some of us are working at a job for a specific purpose, and that is to tell others of the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. I want to remind you that no matter who you are or what you have done in the past, God can still use you for the enhancement of His kingdom here on earth. I know that in 2 or 3 weeks' time, the church calendar will be kicking off again. Youth Group, Kidz Club, and everyone will be back to school. Just remember *why* you're there. Jesus says that we are the light of the world, and that we should let our light so shine that people may see our good works and because of that they give glory and praise to God our father. Let us pray.

[praying]

Heavenly Father, thank You for calling Jeremiah at a young age, that, God, even though he was young, that God, You still used him for a very specific purpose. And Father God, even though it is true about Jeremiah, God, it is still true about us today. That God, You have called us for a specific purpose, and that, God, is to bring hope into the world that we live in today. Father God, thank You for Your word and, God, may we live our mission. And God, help us to realize why You created us in this world: to bring people to You and to glorify Your name. Thank You for who You are and what You have done. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.