Happy Monday, everyone. Today we will continue our walk through the Biblical books with a brief look at the book of Jeremiah.

Like Isaiah, Jeremiah is one of the four so-called “major prophets” in the Old Testament. Again, they are referred to as “major” because of their length, not because of their relative importance.

The prophet Jeremiah’s ministry started in 627 BC and ended with the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 BC. It is a lengthy and complex discourse to Jerusalem and the nation of Judah to turn from its evil ways otherwise they will face destruction at the hand of the Babylonians. (As an aside, lest anyone think that these are some dusty old fables, the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC is well documented in the historical record.)

So, what do we learn from these writings that took place almost 3,000 years ago? What do we make of these prophecies today in the course of modern life?

At the outset of this book, the Lord issues to Jeremiah his prophetic call. Like Moses before him, Jeremiah claimed to be not up to the task. This is how it takes place:

“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” (1:4-8).

Moses tried the same thing: “My Lord, I’ve never been able to speak well…I have a slow mouth and a thick tongue” (Exodus 4:10). But, as we have seen many times, and as a good friend of mine says, “God doesn’t call the qualified, He qualifies the called.”

With Moses, the Lord sends him with his brother Aaron. With Jeremiah, “[T]he Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘I have put my words in your mouth’” (1:9).

As it was with Moses, and as it was with Jeremiah, so it is with us. Like Jeremiah, the Lord knows us even before we are conceived. Notice also that God promised neither Moses nor Jeremiah (nor us) tomorrow. God promised neither of them an easy time. God promised neither of them fame or fortune. Instead, God’s promise to Moses, and to Jeremiah, and to us today, here and now, is this: “I am with you, and I will rescue you.”

For us, that rescue came in the form of God’s own Son, Jesus. As you go about your day today, know that God has known you from before the beginning of time. Know that
He is with you, and that your Rescuer, your Redeemer, your Risen Christ, lives at His right hand, where He waits to embrace you in eternity.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

July 12
Grace and peace to you this day.

I won’t lie, reading through all 52 chapters of Jeremiah can be a rough go. It is no light and airy read. It is full of gloom, darkness and despair. And yet, as we will see tomorrow and Thursday, in the midst of all of this, our God is a God of hope, and a God of grace, and a God of renewal. He is a God with a deep and abiding love for His people. That is the essence of God’s character.

That being said, because of His love for us, when we turn our backs on Him, as did the Israelites, He is saddened to the point of tears. This is what He says through Jeremiah to the people of Judah:

“Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people. Oh, that I had in the desert a lodging place for travelers, so that I might leave my people and go away from them; for they are all adulterers, a crowd of unfaithful people” (9:1-2).

If you are a parent, no doubt you have cried over your children. You have been consumed with worry and anxiety about their behavior or life circumstances to the point of tears. So it is with the Lord. Simply put, the Lord of all Creation is capable of deep grief. And grieve He does.

Notice also that He refers to His people as “adulterers.” This is a common theme in Scripture, and certainly in Jeremiah. For example, the Lord refers to His people as a “bride [who] loved me” (2:1) and says to His people “I am your husband” (3:14). This is no small thing. God is saying to the Israelites, and to us, “I am in a spiritual union with you. I am your partner in this life and the next.”

I don’t know about you, but wow! The God of the galaxies and of the ocean depths loves us so much that He compares our relationship to a marriage. No wonder He weeps when we place him second, or third, or fourth, in our lives.
So today, my prayer for you is this: know that the Almighty, the Most High, loves you so much that He proposes to you. Accept His offer, and then see what abundance your blessings will be.

IHS,

Pastor Lou

July 13

Greetings to you today in the name of Jesus the Messiah.

The book of Jeremiah has two of my all-time favorite verses in Scripture. The one we will look at today is also one of my wife Judy’s favorites as well. But first, a little context.

As we have seen, the prophet Jeremiah speaks on behalf of the Lord of the coming destruction at the hands of the Babylonians as punishment for the ongoing sin of the Jewish people. To be clear, this sin was deep and pervasive. It involved the worship of idols, sexual immorality, and grievous social injustice. In a word, the Lord had had enough.

And yet, with the Lord, death and destruction never have the final say. There is always the hope of tomorrow. The Lord had said that with the Babylonian invasion, the people would be removed from the Promised Land and sent into exile. However, the story doesn’t end there. This is what He says next:

“When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen” (29:10-11).

Monday we learned that God knows us from before we are in our mother’s wombs and is always with us for the tasks ahead. Yesterday we learned that God grieves when we turn our backs on Him and desires a deep relationship with us. Today we learn that God has a plan for us, and that plan is to “prosper” us.

The Hebrew word used here for “prosper” is actually shalom. A full understanding of this word is best understood not as material prosperity, but as “peace, completeness, wholeness.”

Said another way, the Lord is telling the Israelites, and us today, that “My plan is to make you whole, and complete, and abiding in peace. And that can only be done in, and through, Me.”

I pray that you take that to, and into, your heart today. Experience the wholeness, the completeness, and the peace that can only come with experiencing Him.
IHS,
Pastor Lou

July 14
As we finish our look at the book of Jeremiah today, let me share what many of you know to be one of my very favorite verses in all of God’s Word:

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people: (31:33).

This new covenant written on our hearts is done so with the sacrificial blood of the Lamb, Jesus the Messiah. This is how Jesus Himself describes it to his friends at the Last Supper:

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

The Israelites had to wait six hundred years for this covenant to be fulfilled. Today, we are a covenant people. The promised has been fulfilled. The debt has been paid. The grave has no hold on us. Our beating hearts bear the promise of the Almighty, written by His Finger with the blood of His Son.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

July 15
Happy Friday, everyone!
Here’s your musical devotional for today. Turn up the volume and enjoy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3LK3wlHnVE

IHS,
Pastor Lou