



Jeremiah 33.10-16

Sermon – Advent Sunday – 29.22.09

MEET THE PROPHET OF DOOM

I wonder how it would feel to be well known as a spoilsport, a miserable bringer of bad news, a constant critic of your country, a wretched pessimist who always preaches doom and gloom? How would it feel to overhear a conversation between strangers and one says to the other “Cheer up! Don’t be such an ‘Andrew Tweedy’!”

THAT’S what it was like for the prophet Jeremiah – only much worse. The words of his calling set the pattern of his ministry:-

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***

Jeremiah 1.9-10

Notice how different the final pair of verbs is – I’ll come back to that later.

Jeremiah lived in the darkest days of the kingdom of Judah, as it declined under a series of weak, hopeless kings, corrupt priests and lying prophets into a chaotic, idolatrous, godless mess and eventually into the Babylonian exile.

It was Jeremiah’s painful and unenviable task to issue warning after eloquent warning to his people

- that they were breaking their ancient agreement with God,
- that God was highly displeased with them
- and that their lifestyle would have disastrous consequences.

One of the ways Jeremiah tried to get people’s attention was by predicting the end of the sound of joyful wedding celebrations in Jerusalem and all of Judah. He speaks on behalf of God when he warns:-

I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate.

Jeremiah 7.34

He repeats this same warning in almost identical words in 16.9 and 25.10. Why is this example of wedding feasts so potent? *Because to get married is an investment in the future, an expression of joyful hope and the prospect of new life. Jeremiah predicts that in the coming days no one will have the heart or the confidence to get married, least of all hold a wedding feast.*

Jeremiah did not make himself popular – his prophecies were the last thing that the religious and political leaders of a nation on the skids wanted to hear. The book of Jeremiah allows us to see the deep personal anguish which his ministry caused him, for example:-



THERE IS HOPE

God speaks through the prophet Jeremiah:-

Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant.

Jeremiah 31.28

He goes on in chapter 31 to spell out the new covenant of grace with which God would once again bless and include and be reconciled with his people.

In chapter 32 Jeremiah is told by God to buy a field in Jerusalem, which he does, for 17 shekels of silver. Bear in mind the enemy troops were breaking down the city gates at this time – how many people do you think were buying land in Jerusalem!!

But Jeremiah had been given the vision to see beyond the years of exile to a time of restoration and of a joyful return to Jerusalem.

In chapter 33 there is a very telling return to the idea of wedding feasts:-

*'This is what the LORD says: "You say about this place, 'It is a desolate waste, without people or animals.' Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, **there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank-offerings to the house of the LORD...**'*

Jeremiah 33.10-11

THERE IS HOPE even at the darkest moment of despair! And this hope is centred on the coming of the Messiah:-

"In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Saviour."

Jeremiah 33.15-16

God will fulfil his promise, he will reach out in grace and mercy and healing in the person of his Son, our Lord.

This is the Advent hope and it is the unexpected punchline of the prophet Jeremiah, formerly known as the prophet of doom and gloom.

HOW TO BE A 'JEREMIAH'

Like Jeremiah and his contemporaries, we live in a society under siege, surrounded and threatened by evil powers too strong for us, powers which want to kill our hope, separate us from God. But God doesn't want us to live in despair and hopelessness. God keeps his promises and he has promised to bless and heal and restore. He's calling us to invest in the future, to express joyful hope and show confidence in the prospect of new life.



So today on Advent Sunday, 2500+ years after the death of this amazing prophet, how can we celebrate Jeremiah's memory?

- We can be prepared to ***swim against the tide*** when times appear to be good; asking the Holy Spirit for the courage and wisdom to give a tough love analysis of where society is going wrong; to remind all people of the allegiance we owe to God and to warn of the consequences of breaking off our ties with God.
- We can work on our ***prayer life***, developing a ***patient, focused intimacy with God***, so that we are aware of His heart concerns, His kingdom activities and His words for the present day. God's phone number is Jeremiah 33.3 – let's use it and do what He says!
- We can ***develop vision*** which sees beyond the wasteland of broken dreams, to the dawning hope of life in Christ, the perfect King who rules with justice and righteousness and transforms the world.
- We can ***sing*** that hope, ***live*** that hope, ***share*** that Advent hope with everybody all our heart, soul, mind and strength for the rest of our lives.