

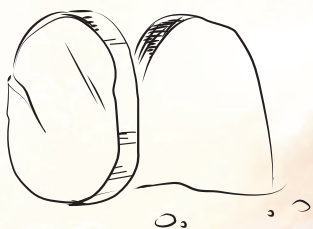
GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

APRIL 13 - 17, 2020



EASTER SUNDAY

MONDAY

Jeremiah 1

"I the Lord am with you and will rescue you, declares the Lord."
(Jeremiah 1:8)

This is a great chapter. In this chapter not only do we see the call of Jeremiah, but we see the Lord God who is in complete control. Nothing catches Him off guard; He is even using the pagan nations to accomplish His purposes (just as He is using this virus now).

He calls a young man by the name of Jeremiah. He formed Jeremiah in his mother's womb, setting him apart before he was even born to be used during these times by God as His mouthpiece providing direction, discernment, and hope.

I am reminded of Psalm 139:13-17 and of Paul who tells us in Ephesians 1:5-11 that God predestined us to be adopted as His sons and daughters before even time began. He chose us according to His plan to work with Him in accomplishing His will.

Chapter 29 of Jeremiah is famous for verse 11 that talks about the hope, future and prosperity that God promises to the nation of Israel. But first, before these verses come into being, there will be a time of exile, a time of upheaval. It is easy to claim Jeremiah 29:11; it is another thing to go through the time of exile. But we can go through the exile as we remember who God is, that God is in control, that He has predestined/

called us to be used by Him, and that He will give us what we need to accomplish His purposes so that the time of fulfillment comes about.

In a sense we are in living in exile—locked in our homes—and yet we have a voice. We have a calling with our families, our friends, our neighbors, and those we interact with via social media. God has called you and gifted you. He has set you apart. Whether young or old, new in the faith or a seasoned veteran, God has put His Spirit in you, His words in you. And nothing can stand against establishing His purpose through you. God's Word will be fulfilled.

QUESTIONS

What specific action might He be asking you to do today? How might He be asking you to trust in His plans rather than your own?

PRAYERS FOR CHI ALPHA STUDENTS, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Pray for Brandon and Kendra Kerston, who serve with Chi Alpha at San Diego State University. Many students have been adjusting to online schooling and have to learn new organization and time management skills. Pray for them and for the Kerstons to coach them well.

TUESDAY

Genesis 12:1-5; Jeremiah 2

One of the questions we might ask is: Why did God allow the nation of Judah to go into exile in the first place? Why did He not save them like He had done so often?

Randy Frazee in *The Story* reminds us that God created the nation of Israel, and He called Abraham for one purpose: to reveal Himself to others. Yes, God called Abraham saying, "I will bless you." But why was God going to bless Abraham? So that he would be a blessing to others.

The Israelites had begun to think that God was just about blessing them, that it was all about them. And God basically says, "If I allow you to continue in your sinful ways, I will send a confusing message to the rest of the world about who I am. And so, God allows the Babylonians to take the Israelites into exile. But there is a remnant that will return from exile and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Why? Because God made a promise and God keeps His promises.

God promised that a King would come through the line of David who would reign forever. That King, of course, is Jesus. For Jesus to come, the Israelites needed to again be a nation. Even though for a time God allowed Judah to be disciplined, He never forgot His promise. He brought a remnant back who rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple.

Sometimes I feel like a remnant. So many believe that God will only make good things happen, and they get mad when things do not go the way they want things to go. So many think they know what is best and make their own decisions about what is right and wrong. So many just don't believe in God at all.

But I am reminded that God has blessed me for the purpose of allowing others to see Him. And so the question is: Am I allowing others to see God in me or am I hoarding His blessings? Are people confused about who God is when they see me or am I a light in the midst of a dark world?

By the way, Randy Frazee made one further comment about God's discipline. He said that grace is not that fantastic until we realize how much we need it. Wow!

QUESTIONS

Have you been honest enough about yourself with God and with yourself about your own shortcomings that you know how fantastic grace is?

PRAYERS FOR CHI ALPHA STUDENTS, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Pray for new students to find "Virtual Chi Alpha" as they look for community and answers during this season.

WEDNESDAY

Philippians 1:18-26; 3:1-14

Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. He was not called to be successful by the world's standards. He was just called to be faithful.

I find it fascinating that in chapter 1 of Jeremiah, God tells Jeremiah that no one will harm him, that he will have enemies, but that God would protect him. And then I read the story of Jeremiah. He is put in stocks, thrown into a cistern, forced to remain in Jerusalem when the nation is taken into safe exile in Babylonia. And finally, even though he now tells those who remain in Jerusalem (after so many had been exiled) to stay put, he is forced to go to Egypt by those who are seeking help (protection), not from God, but from the nation of Egypt. Jeremiah ends up dying in Egypt. (Tradition has it that he was stoned to death.)

Success by worldly standards and success by God's standards are often totally different. Jeremiah was successful; after all, he made it into Scripture and God uses him still today to speak to us. Jeremiah was successful because he remained faithful. And God did not allow anything to happen to Jeremiah until the work that God wanted to accomplish through him was accomplished. We can have that same assurance. Nothing will be able to remove us from Jesus' hands. God will accomplish His purposes through us. Yes, God knows the day and hour we will die, but we will not die until that day and hour.

Trusting God and expecting God be true to His word enabled Jeremiah to talk about the faithfulness of God in the midst of his weeping. He had hope, faith, and the assurance that God's word would be fulfilled.

My dreams might not come to fruition, but God's dreams most assuredly will. Like Jeremiah, we are to be faithful and align ourselves with God's call on our lives, knowing that His word will never fail.

Darrell Johnson tells the story of some seminarians playing basketball in a school gym only to look over to the stands and see a janitor reading the book of Revelation. They went over and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" To which the janitor responded, "Oh, yes. Jesus is gonna win." Despite all of the ups and downs, Jeremiah saw evidence each day of this truth: God wins.

QUESTIONS

Where are you tempted to question and doubt? What might it look like for you to claim Jesus' victory today in your situation?

PRAYERS FOR CHI ALPHA STUDENTS, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Pray for the financial well-being of the Chi Alpha students who have lost jobs, and pray for the staff members who already live by faith.

THURSDAY

Jeremiah 29:1-4

“There are three stages in Jeremiah’s ministry: (1) From 627 to 605 B.C. he prophesied while Judah was threatened by Assyria and Egypt. (2) From 605 to 586 B.C. he proclaimed God’s judgment while Judah was threatened and besieged by Babylon. (3) From 586 to about 580 B.C. he ministered in Jerusalem and Egypt after Judah’s downfall.” (Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa) Though we can group these three basic stages of his ministry, the book that bears his name does not seem to be chronologically structured but is a gathering together of his prophetic messages.

In Jeremiah 29, a chapter we will be examining over the next five weeks, we are given a glimpse into the letter that Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to those who had been carried off into exile in Babylon. These were days of defeat and, though Jeremiah had foretold them, he does not stand by and say, “I told you so.” Rather, he cries with those who have lost so much—and he offers words of encouragement. God is not finished; there is hope.

Eugene Peterson writes this about exile: “Exile is traumatic and terrifying. Our sense of who we are is very much determined by the place we are in and the people we are with. When that changes, violently and abruptly, who are we? The accustomed ways we have of finding our worth and sensing our significance vanish. The first wave of emotion recedes and leaves us feeling worthless, meaningless.”

Jeremiah's hope is to validate the emotions and enable the people to ground themselves in the power, presence and plans of God. This will not happen overnight, but God is not finished. The people Jeremiah wrote to were completely disoriented and many were giving into self-pity. But these times do not call for denial—refusing to accept our current circumstances, wishing that what is happening was not, or reflecting on how things might have been different do not help. Instead, we need to say (as one person recently said), “Name it to tame it.”

“In these times, asking some questions is beneficial, such as: What is God calling us to? What am I afraid of? How can I prepare for what is ahead with God's help?” (Andrea Gurney) Times of centering prayer, finding our identity afresh in being God's people, and recommitting ourselves to His work are paramount. God is not finished with us yet. Be still and know that He is God.

QUESTIONS

How might we, with God's help, name what we are feeling and begin to prepare with open hands for what God has for our future?

PRAYERS FOR CHI ALPHA STUDENTS, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Pray for the mental health of the Chi Alpha students at SDSU. Students 18-22 years old are more prone to mental health issues already. With all the change during this coronavirus pandemic, this is only exacerbated.

FRIDAY

Lamentations 3:19-26

“There are three themes that run through the five laments of Jeremiah. The most prominent is the theme of mourning over Jerusalem’s holocaust. The Holy City has been laid waste and desolate: God’s promised judgment for sin has come. In his sorrow, Jeremiah speaks for himself, for the captives, and sometimes for the personified city. The second theme is a confession of sin and acknowledgment of God’s righteous and holy judgment upon Judah. The third theme is least prominent but very important: it is a note of hope in God’s future restoration of His people. In His mercy He will be faithful to His covenant promise.” (Wilkinson and Boa)

“In the Hebrew text, the first four chapters [of Lamentations] are alphabetic acrostics. The first word in each of the twenty-two verses of chapters 1, 2, and 4 begins with the twenty-two successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 has sixty-six verses because three verses are allotted to each Hebrew letter. The acrostic form may have been used to express the full range (from A to Z) of their sufferings, and it may also have been an aid to memory ... Jeremiah’s five mournful poems can be entitled: The Destruction of Jerusalem (1); The Anger of Jehovah (2); The Prayer for Mercy (3); The Siege of Jerusalem (4); and The Prayer for Restoration (5).” (Wilkinson and Boa)

At the center of this book is a proclamation that God is faithful, His mercies never fail.

Spend some time reflecting on the promises of God. How many can you name? Where have you seen God fulfill these promises in your life? Years ago I remember being challenged by a pastor who asked the question: Where have you seen God show up in your life? If He went to all that trouble before, why would you question that He would not do it again?

God's past actions give us confidence to wait for His future work. Paul says it this way in Romans 8:31-32: *"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"* What a great promise, though it is worth reading in context beginning at verse 18 where Paul begins talking about his present sufferings.

QUESTIONS

Our present is not the final answer. God is the final answer. His promises will yet be fulfilled. What promise is God calling you to claim today?

PRAYERS FOR CHI ALPHA STUDENTS, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Pray for the Chi Alpha students who are transitioning to home. During the three months these students are home over the summer, it is a concern because they are back in their environments where they were not serving Christ. Now they are there for five months. Pray that they would be a light instead of being overshadowed by darkness.

Sources

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- Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Old Testament: A Quick Guide to Help You Get More Out of the Bible* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1981) p. 199.
- Eugene H. Peterson, *Run with the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009) p. 147.
- Darrell W. Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004), p. 20.
- Dr. Andrea Gurney's quote from a webinar on March 3, 2020, at <https://andregurney.com>
- Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible: A Quick Guide to Help You Get More Out of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), p.208-210.

