

**Scripture Texts
and
Worship Planning Notes**

***Early Fall 2016 Preaching Series:
Jeremiah***

August 21 – October 16, 2016

Citations & abbreviations key is on last page

August 21: 21st Sunday in O.T. (Proper 16)

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the LORD said to me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a boy';
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.
Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,

says the LORD."

Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me,

"Now I have put my words in your mouth.
See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant."

Response: Psalm 71:1-6

NRSV

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.

**In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me and save me.**

**Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.**

Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.

**For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.**

Upon you I have leaned from my birth;
it was you who took me from my mother's womb.

My praise is continually of you.

Sermon Title: "Thus Saith the Lord: You Are Called"

Themes and thoughts:

- Call
- Giving witness
- God working through human agents/witnesses
- The power of 'the Word'

- The narrative of this story is...:
 - Divine initiative
 - Human resistance
 - Rebuke and reassurance
 - Commissioning
- Question: Where does call come from?
 - is this passage Jeremiah's *personal* experience, or something more akin to a formula of an ordination liturgy?
 - Is this simply a story told to affirm that the work of the prophet is not of merely human origin?
 - Call comes both internally *and* externally
 - the call as part of the prophet's *inborn identity*
 - Does Jeremiah himself matter? Or is the call entirely about God's sovereignty?
- God had claimed Jeremiah's life from before birth

Quotes from commentary:

- “No historical structure, political policy, or defense scheme can secure a community against [the Lord] when that community is under the judgment of [the Lord].” (Brueggemann, 25)
- “God works in freedom without respect to the enduring structures so evident, or to the powerless despair when structures are gone.” (Brueg., 25)
- “Who wants to bear such a burdensome word(!?) But the word overrules its bearer. The message requires the messenger.” (Brueg., 26)
- “Prophecy is the divine word of hope and explanation, which is the antidote to human despair.” (Clements, 14)

Music / hymnody associations and ideas (in no particular order):

- We Are Called (Come! Live in the Light!) – GTG 749
- Here I Am, Lord – GTG 69
- Lead On, Eternal Sovereign (LANCASHIRE) – NCH 573
- You Shall Prophecy, All My People – NCH 578
- Come, Labor On (ORA LABORA) – NCH 532
- Lord, Speak to Me That I May Speak (CANONBURY) – NCH 531
- Will You Come and Follow Me? (The Summons) – GTG 726
- Today We Are All Called to Be Disciples (KINGSFOLD) – GTG 757
- Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (LOBE DEN HERREN) – Pilgrim 15
- Ps. 139: You Are Before Me, Lord –
PfAS 139-D (HIGHLAND CATHEDRAL) or GTG 28 (SURSUM CORDA)
- Ps 139: O God, You Search Me and You Know Me – GTG 29
- Loving Spirit, loving Spirit (OMNI DIE) – GTG 293

August 28: 22nd Sunday in O.T. (Proper 17)

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus says the LORD:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after **worthless things**,
[vaporous puffs of wind]
and became worthless themselves?
They did not say, "Where is the LORD
who brought us up
from the land of Egypt,
*[they have forgotten who's they are and
where they come from]*

who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep darkness,
in a land that no one passes through,
where no one lives?"

I brought you into a plentiful land
to eat its fruits and its good things.
But when you entered you defiled my land,
and made my heritage an abomination.

The priests did not say,
"Where is the LORD?"
Those who handle the law
did not know me;
the rulers transgressed against me;

the prophets prophesied by Baal,
and went after things that do not profit.

Therefore once more I accuse you,
says the LORD,
and I accuse your children's children.
Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar and examine with care;
see if there has ever been such a thing.
Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?
But my people have changed **their glory**
for something that does not profit.
*[The people's glory is God... this is still the
case, even though they have transgressed]*

Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
says the LORD,
for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water.

Response: Psalm 81:1, 10-16

Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob.
I am the LORD your God,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.
"But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.

NRSV (alt.)

O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
Then I would quickly subdue their enemies,
and turn my hand against their foes.
Those who hate the LORD would cringe in fear,
and their doom would last forever.
I would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock
I would satisfy you."

Sermon Title: "Thus Saith the Lord: I Miss You"

Themes and thoughts:

- Truth-telling

- God's Judgment (what is the place of this in our faith / understanding of relationship with God)
- How can accusation function as an *invitation* to turn around?
- Note that the indictment and the call-to-repentance are addressed unreservedly to all, to the whole people/nation
 - Jeremiah doesn't focus on political miscalculation, dangerous alliances, etc. It's not just the leaders. Instead he puts his finger "directly upon the deceitful waywardness of the human heart". *All have sinned!* (Cle. 26)
- How can accusation actually reveal *care* and *desire for restoration*?
- This takes the form of a 'lawsuit' of God against the people for their unfaithfulness to God
 - The 'infidelity' is that the people have stopped acknowledging who's they are and where they came from
- Vs. 13 - The nation wants to be its own source of life (cisterns of their own), rather than drink of the water that God freely gives

Quotes from commentary:

- "Where the story of the land is lost, the loss of the land itself will soon follow" (Brueg. 35)
- Vs 8 - "Where there is such amnesia [of the story of where they came from], one is not surprised that derivative requirements of humanness erode. Where the creed is distorted, public life becomes skewed." (Brueg. 35)
- "[The Lord] does not want simply to terminate the relationship, but is willing to struggle, perhaps to fix blame, *perhaps also to recover the relationship.*" (Brueg. 35)

Music / hymnody associations and ideas (in no particular order):

- Vierne "Kyrie" from Messe Solonnelle? (Or is that not a piece that can be ready for 1st Sunday back?)
- John Ness Beck, "Offertory"
- O God of Earth and Altar (LLANGLOFFAN) - NCH 582
- Hope of the World (DONNE SECOURS) - Pilgrim 398 / GTG 734
- Open Our Eyes - LUYH 297
- "We Are Called" (Come! Live in the Light!) - GTG 749
- Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah (CWM RHONDDA) - Pilgrim 93
- Great God of Earth and Heaven (KING'S LYNN) - NCH 579
- Bless God, O My Soul (SPRING WOODS) - NCH 549
- Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ (SURSUM CORDA) - NCH 520
- God Weeps at Love Withheld - *Sing Prayer & Praise* 69; music for 2 tunes with this text (HIROSHIMA & DELGADO) at http://www.hopepublishing.com/media/pdf/hset/hs_350.pdf (*perhaps something for choir rather than cong.*)

September 4: 23rd Sunday in O.T. (Proper 18)

Jeremiah 18:1-11

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Come, go down to the potter's house [important image], and there I will let you hear my words." So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked [same verb used here for God's "making" of the clay into the first human in Genesis 2] it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Then the word of the LORD came to me: Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the LORD. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the LORD: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

Response: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

NRSV

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

**Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.**

You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

**For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.**

**I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.**

**My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.**

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

**How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!**

**I try to count them— they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.**

Sermon Title: "Thus Saith the Lord: I Can Reshape You"

Themes and thoughts:

- Renewal
- Second chances
- *Invitation to repent* – and assurance that such would be received/welcomed
- *Transformation...* the ability/invitation to be reshaped
- God's sovereignty
 - *God is in control* and will reshape us until we are as God desires
- And yet we are free in our response and the attached consequence
 - Thus a tension between God's sovereign will and our free will)
- Allusion / connection to the creation story? (God shaping and re-shaping "clay" into life...)
- Even when the potter "rejects" the form the clay is taking, the potter does ***not*** reject the clay itself! It is the same clay that receives the opportunity to be shaped anew
 - This is an important lens / point for understanding the function of God's "judgment"... Even when God "rejects" what we have done, God does not reject us

Music / hymnody associations and ideas (in no particular order):

- Have Thine Own Way, Lord (ADELAIDE) – LUYH 737 / Chalice 588 (*This one uses the potter-and-clay imagery explicitly*)
- Ps 139: O God, You Search Me and You Know Me – GTG 29
- Ps. 139: You Are Before Me, Lord –
PfAS 139-D (HIGHLAND CATHEDRAL) or GTG 28 (SURSUM CORDA)
- He's Got the Whole World in His Hands – LUYH 26
- O God, Our Help in Ages Past (ST ANNE) – NCH 25
- Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works (LACQUIPARLE) – NCH 3
- Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading (NJOO KWETU, ROHO MWEMA) – GTG 287
- If You But Trust in God to Guide You (NEUMARK) – NCH 410
- God the Sculptor of the Mountains (JENNINGS-HOUSTON) – GTG 5
- Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above (MIT FREUDEN ZART) – Pilgrim 20
- The God of Abraham Praise (LEONI) – NCH 24
- O God, as with a Potter's Hand (WINSTON-SALEM) – NCH 550 (*this uses the potter-and-clay imagery explicitly*)

September 11: 24th Sunday in O.T. (Proper 19)

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

¹¹ At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot wind comes from me out of the bare heights in the desert toward my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse—a wind too strong for that. Now it is I who speak in judgment against them.

²² "For **my people are foolish,**
they do not know me;
they are stupid children,
they have no understanding.
They are skilled in doing evil,
but do not know how to do good."

²³ I looked on the earth,
and lo, it was waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.
I looked on the mountains,
and lo, they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.

I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,
and all the birds of the air had fled.
I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins
before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

For thus says the LORD:
The whole land shall be a desolation;
yet I will not make a full end.
Because of this the earth shall mourn,
and the heavens above grow black;
for I have spoken, I have purposed;
I have not relented nor will I turn back.

Response: Psalm 14

NRSV (alt.)

Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."

They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good.

**The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God.**

**They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse;
there is no one who does good, no, not one.**

Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the LORD?

**There they shall be in great terror,
for God is with the company of the righteous.**

You would confound the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.

**O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!
When the LORD restores the fortunes of the people,
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.**

Sermon Title: "Thus Saith the Lord: I Will Not Be Mocked"

Themes and thoughts:

- God's judgment
- God's justice
- **What is our response when we look out at what's going wrong/bad in the world?** Especially if/when we realize that at-least-part of the cause is our own misdeeds (whether individually, or the misdeeds and injustices of our society collectively)?
- The spiritual work of *lament* – what do we do when we look out at whatever (the world, our life, etc) and all appears to be "waste and void"?
- "my people are foolish" – in the context of the verses left out of this lection, what's being said here is that the people do not even think a destructive judgment can happen here; they are unmoved by the warnings; they are casual, indifferent, and un-noticing
 - "The Israelites are not even termed guilty, simply stupid and foolish." (Brueg. 58)
- Brueg. notes that "This indictment of stupidity has a sadness to it" (58). What are our parallels... **when do we tinge with sadness over the fatal stupidity and nearsightedness of**

ourselves, our communities, our families and friends, our society and world...?

- The “stupidity” / “foolishness” connects back to the recognition in the lection for August 28th about the people having forgotten who-and-who’s they are and where they come from
 - “Israel knows many things the world values—political cunning, military planning, theological propriety—but lacks the covenantal awareness that saves.” (Brueg. 59)
- Cosmic nature of the observed desolation starting in vs. 23 – when judgment comes, it can feel like (or even be the case that) the whole world has crashed down around us
 - “The power of chaos is so dominant, it is as though creation never happened.” (Br 60)
- Not immediately in this passage, but connected to its themes: Jeremiah 10:25 – “all the birds of the air had fled”: Elie Wiesel remembered this verse when returning to Auschwitz, writing, “Then and only then did I remember that, during the tempest of fire and silence, there were no birds to be seen on the horizon; they had fled the skies above all the death-camps. I stood in Birkenau and remembered Jeremiah” (Elie Wiesel, *Five Biblical Portraits* [University of Notre Dame Press, 1981], 126; cited in Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986], 170.)
- “Yet I will not make a full end” – uncertainty on the part of the Lord, out of the Lord’s yearning not to destroy? Is this where hope begins to spring from?
 - **What is our own tension between wanting our ‘enemy’ destroyed and our wanting to embody ‘mercy’?**
- *Brueggemann on how to understand such a harsh prophetic poem:*

“We may ask about the function of this dangerous poem. We *must* stress that it is a poem. It is *not* a blueprint for the future. It is *not* a prediction. It is *not* an act of theology that seeks to scare into repentance. It is, rather a rhetorical attempt to engage this numbed, unaware community in an imaginative embrace of what is happening. The world is becoming unglued. The poet has the awesome burden of helping his people sense that their presumed world is in jeopardy, because God’s holy patience is fully ended. When that patience is exhausted, creation is not permitted to continue its disobedient course.” (Brueg. 61)

 - **How might we find “good news” in this idea that God will not permit creation to continue its disobedient course?** Rather than only hearing this all as harsh judgment against ourselves, where might we look to those places in life/world about which we despair and see brokenness, and find hope in the promise that God will not let such places continue?

Music / hymnody associations and ideas (in no particular order):

- Ps. 77: Hear My Cry, O God, and Save Me (GENEVAN 77) – GTG 781
- O God, My God – NCH 515
- Great God of Earth and Heaven (KING’S LYNN) – NCH 579
- O God of Earth and Altar (LLANGLOFFAN) – NCH 582
- God Moves in a Mysterious Way (DUNDEE) – NCH 412
- Ps. 14: The Foolish in Their Hearts Deny (MAPLE AVENUE) – GTG 335
- Heaven Shall Not Wait (HEAVEN SHALL NOT WAIT) – GTG 773
- Judge Eternal, Throned in Splendor (RHUDDLAN) – GTG 342
- Ps. 55: Come Like Driving Wind, O God (NUN KOMM DER HEIDEN HEILAND) – GTG 55
- In an Age of Twisted Values (CHURCH UNITED) – GTG 345
- We Love to Sound Your Praises (PASSION CHORALE) – new text with direct reference to this passage: http://www.hymnary.org/text/we_love_to_sound_your_praises
- Come, O Fount of Every Blessing (NETTLETON) – NCH 459, *could work as an open or close*

September 18: 25th Sunday in O.T. (Proper 20)
Nancy preaching

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

My joy is gone, grief is upon me,
my heart is sick.

Hark, the cry of my poor people
from far and wide in the land:

"Is the LORD not in Zion?

Is her King not in her?"

("Why have they provoked me to anger
with their images,

with their foreign idols?")

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended,
and we are not saved."

For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt,
I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me.

Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there?

Why then has the health of my poor people
not been restored?

O that my head were a spring of water,
and my eyes a fountain of tears,

so that I might weep day and night
for the slain of my poor people!

Response: Psalm 79:1-9

NRSV

O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;

they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the air for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth.

They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.

**We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
mocked and derided by those around us.**

How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?

Will your jealous wrath burn like fire?

**Pour out your anger on the nations that do not know you,
and on the kingdoms that do not call on your name.**

For they have devoured Jacob
and laid waste his habitation.

**Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors;
let your compassion come speedily to meet us,
for we are brought very low.**

**Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake.**

Sermon Title: "Thus Saith the Lord: Your Pain Is My Pain"

Themes and thoughts:

- Lament
- Healing
- Grief
- Doubt/questioning
- This passage is **God expressing God's pathos / grief over the people**, over their suffering as well as over the transgressions that led to it: "For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, // I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me"
 - *Note that this is a debated issue in the scholarship; some would say that these verses are the voice of the prophet, not of God. It's open to an interpretive choice...*
- Possible to explore the **God-as-suffering-alongside** approach to answering the "theodicy

- question”, even in those cases when God is presumed to be a part of the ‘cause’
- A question at hand: Do catastrophic events undermine the credibility of God?
 - The pathos expressed is **like the “heartsickness of a betrayed lover or a yearning parent”** (Brueg. 92)
 - *Viz.* Buechner: “To love another, as you love a child, is to become vulnerable in a whole new way. It is no longer only through what happens to yourself that the world can hurt you, but through what happens to the one you love also and greatly more hurting. When it comes to your own hurt, there are always things you can do. You can put up a brave front, for one, and behind that front, if you are lucky, if you can persist, you can become a little brave inside yourself. You can become strong in the broken places, as Hemingway said. You can become philosophical, recognizing how much of your troubles you have brought down on your own head and resolving to do better by yourself in the future. ... But when it comes to the hurt of a child you love, you are all but helpless. The child makes terrible mistakes, and there is very little you can do to ease his [*sic*] pain, especially when you are so often a part of his pain, as the child is a part of yours. There is no way to make him strong with such strengths as you may have found through your own hurt, or wise enough through such wisdom, and even if there were, it would be the wrong way because it would be your way and not his. The child’s pain becomes your pain, and as the innocent bystander, maybe it is even a worse pain for you, and in the long run even the bravest front is not much use.” (Frederick Buechner, *Now and Then* [San Francisco and London: Harper & Row, 1983], 54-55; cited in Brueg., 92).
 - “God hurts because God is offended. The ground of the sickness to death is idolatry, the attempt to organize life around controllable objects rather than in reference to holy subject.” (Brueg. 94)
 - “The poignancy of the poem is matched by an absence of specificity. ... The first articulation of the poem can always be freshly presented with new concreteness. Heard in a new situation, this poem will have its powerful say toward new concreteness, almost without interpretation. Each new rendering in new circumstance permits the poem to be God’s grief stricken word in a quite fresh way.” (Brueg. 95)
 - **In what ways would we point to God’s heartbreak and grief-with-us in today’s world?** Over today’s “sins”? What new circumstances would call for re-rendering this prophecy?

Music / hymnody associations and ideas (in no particular order):

- There Is A Balm in Gilead – choir piece or NCH 553
- Healer of Our Every Ill, by Haugen – choir piece or GTG 795
- Lift Your Heads, O Martyrs, Weeping (MAGYAR) – NCH 445
- O Master/Savior, Let Me Walk with Thee/You – Pilgrim 418/NCH 503
- God Weeps with Us Who Weep and Mourn (MOSHIER) – GTG 787
- Ps 147: Praise the Lord Who Heals – LUYH 442 / PfAS 147-B (*this could be a good choir piece, too*)
- We Cannot Measure How You Heal (YE BANKS AND BRAES) – GTG 797
- My Hope is Built on Nothing Less (SOLID ROCK) – NCH 403 (*possible opener or closer*)
- Bless God, O My Soul (SPRING WOODS) – NCH 549
- Grant Us Wisdom to Perceive You (QUEM PASTORES) – NCH 510 (*possible closer*)
- Pues si vivimos / In All Our Living – NCH 499
- By Gracious Powers – NCH 413 (BONHOEFFER) or GTG 818 (INTERCESSOR)
- God of Abraham and Sarah (CONSTANTINE) – NCH 20 (*possible opener*)
- God Weeps at Love Withheld – *Sing Prayer & Praise* 69; music for 2 tunes with this text (HIROSHIMA & DELGADO) at http://www.hopepublishing.com/media/pdf/hset/hs_350.pdf (*perhaps something for choir rather than cong.*)

September 25: 26th Sunday in O.T. (Proper 21)

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah, where King Zedekiah of Judah had confined him.

Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came to me: Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours." Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself." Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy; and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard. In their presence I charged Baruch, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time. For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.

Response: Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16

ELW

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty—
you will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my stronghold,
my God in whom I put my trust."

**For God will rescue you from the snare of the hunter
and from the deadly plague.**

**God's wings will cover you
and you will find refuge beneath them;
God's faithfulness will be your shield and defense.**

You shall not fear any terror in the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day;
nor the plague that stalks in the darkness,
nor the sickness that lays waste at noon.

**I will deliver those who cling to me;
I will behold them, because they know my name.
They will call me, and I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue and honor them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.**

Sermon Title: "Thus Saith the Lord: Even So... Hope"

Themes and thoughts:

- Hope
- Dreams / visions
- Hope in the midst of trouble
- What's going on in this text: The threat of exile, of Israel being toppled and the people losing their land, is close upon them. Jeremiah, however, follows the word of the Lord to buy a piece of land, even though it is certain to soon lose it, as a sign that indeed restoration will come. The purchase is a "putting your money where your mouth is" episode to back up the claim that, in the end, Israel will be restored and the people will be able to return to reclaim what is theirs. The exile will not be the end of the story; there is "life after Babylon".
- Jeremiah takes a "leap of faith", so to speak
- The land claimed by Jeremiah is symbolic/sacramental of the whole of the land for the nation
- **Where do we find courage even in the midst of present or impending trouble?**
- **How can we be signs of a promised future that stands in contrast to present (or soon-to-come) realities?**
- **Where do we get the vision to see what God has in store for us?**
- The story describes the land transaction in very concrete worldly business details... **How do the things of our 'ordinary' lives in the world connect to our faith and to God's promises?**

Music / hymnody associations and ideas (in no particular order):

- On Eagle's Wings – for choir or cong. – GTG 43
- "The Lord Is My Light" – Lillian Bouknight gospel setting, for choir, see PfAS 27-B
- Let Us Hope When Hope Seems Hopeless – NCH 461
- A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (EIN' FESTE BURG) – NCH 439 or NCH 440
- Be Still, My Soul (FINLANDIA) – NCH 488
- Be Thou My Vision (SLANE) – GTG 450
- Jesus, Still Lead On (SEELENBRÄUTIGAM) – NCH 446
- I Will Trust in the Lord – NCH 416
- By Gracious Powers – NCH 413 (BONHOEFFER) or GTG 818 (INTERCESSOR)
- God Moves in a Mysterious Way (DUNDEE) – NCH 412
- If You But Trust in God to Guide You (NEUMARK) – NCH 410
- How Firm a Foundation (FOUNDATION) – NCH 407
- All My Hope on God is Founded (MICHAEL) – NCH 408 (*Note, Chalice has this set with NEANDER/UNSER HERRISCHER*)
- Live into Hope (TRURO) – GTG 772
- Great Is Thy Faithfulness (FAITHFULNESS) – NCH 423
- In the Bulb There Is a Flower (PROMISE) – NCH 433
- When All is Ended – GTG 376 (YOGANANDA) or Chalice 703 (SINE NOMINE)
- Give to the Winds Thy Fears (FESTAL SONG) – GTG 815

October 2

Probably off-lectionary, guest for World Communion Sunday

October 9: 28th Sunday in O.T. (Proper 23)

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. [It said:]

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But **seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you** into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for **in its welfare you will find your welfare.**

Response: Psalm 66:1-12

ELW

Be joyful in God, all you lands; be joyful, all the earth.

Sing the glory of God's name; sing the glory of God's praise.

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!

Because of your great strength your enemies cringe before you.

**All the earth bows down before you,
sings to you, sing out your name."**

**Come now and see the works of God,
how awesome are God's deeds toward all people.**

God turned the sea into dry land,
so that they went through the water on foot,
and there we rejoiced in God.

Ruling forever in might,
God keeps watch over the nations;
let no rebels exalt themselves.

**Bless our God, you peoples;
let the sound of praise be heard.**

**Our God has kept us among the living
and has not allowed our feet to slip.**

For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us just as silver is tried.

You brought us into the net;
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.

You let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water;
but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

Sermon Title: "Thus Saith the Lord: Seek the Welfare of Where I've Sent You"

Themes and thoughts:

- Vs. 7 - "Seek the welfare (shalom) of the city where I have sent you into exile"
- "In *its* welfare you will find your welfare"
- Mission / missional church
- Key verbs: build, live, plant, eat

- Prepare for the long-haul, but do so in life-affirming and faithful ways
- While the exile may be an unavoidable fate, it is *also* an opportunity for missional witness and responsibility
 - **Many have remarked that this is the reality the ‘mainline’ church faces in society today... we are in an ‘exile’ of sorts (at least from the reality we knew in the mid-20th-century)... but we have great missional and faithful opportunity new and unique to this environment**
 - **What would it mean that in seeking the welfare of the world in which we find ourselves, we (the church) will find our welfare?**
- How does this speak to living in faithful relationship to God while living in relationship to the ‘powers’ of the world in which we find ourselves?
- How does the instruction to the exiles to live, prosper, multiply in exile counter the common conception of exile as sheer annihilation? i.e. life has not ended, it’s just different
 - Again, **very relevant to the changing position of the church in today’s world:** being out of the position(s) we grew accustomed to does not mean the end of life for us, perhaps it’s not even a bad thing... it calls us to a different life and mission

Music / hymnody associations and ideas (in no particular order):

- John Ness Beck, “Offertory”
- Any ‘Prayer of St. Francis’ settings – choir
- How Firm a Foundation – NCH 407
- We Offer Christ (CHARTERHOUSE) – NCH 527
- “We Are Called” (Come! Live in the Light!) – GTG 749
- Great Is Thy Faithfulness (FAITHFULNESS) – NCH 423
- God the Sculptor of the Mountains (JENNINGS-HOUSTON) – GTG 5
- Ps. 66: Make a Joyful Noise to God! (DIX) – GTG 54
- I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me – GTG 700 or choir
- We Are An Offering – LUYH 874
- Ps 122: I Rejoiced When I Heard Them Say (ENGLAND) – GTG 400
- Come to Tend God’s Garden (KING’S WESTON) – NCH 586
- Like a Mother Who Has Borne Us (AUSTIN) – NCH 583
- Born of God, Eternal Savior (WEISSE FLAGGEN) – NCH 542
- Come, Labor On (ORA LABORA) – NCH 532
- Sois la Semilla / You Are the Seed (ID Y ENSEÑAD) – NCH 528
- God of Grace and God of Glory (CWM RHONDDA) – NCH 436
- All My Hope on God Is Founded (MICHAEL) – NCH 408 (*Note, Chalice has this set with NEANDER/UNSER HERRISCHER*)
- In the Midst of New Dimensions (NEW DIMENSIONS) – NCH 391
- Community of Christ (LEONI) – NCH 314
- The Church of Christ, in Every Age (WAREHAM) – NCH 306
- O Spirit of the living God (ST. MATTHEW) – NCH 263

October 16: 29th Sunday in O.T. (Proper 24)

Jeremiah 31:27-34

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD. In those days they shall no longer say:

"The parents have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on edge."

But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Response: Psalm 119:97-104

NRSV

Oh, how I love your law!

It is my meditation all day long.

Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.

**I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.**

**I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.**

I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.

I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.

**How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!**

**Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.**

Sermon Title: "Thus Saith the Lord: The Days Are Surely Coming"

Themes and thoughts:

- New covenant
- Restoration to a new future (not just a revisiting of the old reality)
- Vision / Dream / Hope
 - Including "eschatological" (ultimate) hope
- 'Resurrection'
- **Power of God to make new**
- Set in the 'in-between': death has already happened, resurrection is anticipated
- God is watching over all... **God will not quit until all is accomplished**

- Each new generation is able to act out its own destiny and choose its own future with God (the sins of the parent are not [necessarily] visited upon the children)
- Note that the ‘new’ covenant is not a rejection of the *people* of the ‘old’ one (contra Christian supersessionism)
- The new covenant comes by God’s initiative and desire, by God’s own resolve for the relation
- The new covenant will not be an external rule, but **an internal identity-giving mark...** obeying it “will be as normal and readily accepted as breathing and eating” (Brueg. 293)
- The people will “know the Lord”:
 - A reversal of the earlier place where the people ‘did not recall’ whose they were and where they came from
 - An affirmation of God as the sovereign Lord
 - An obedience to God’s commands for justice
- In the new covenant, all stand on equal footing
- All this is possible because **God has forgiven (divine initiative, grace)**
- “The text invites Jews (and belatedly Christians and others) to stand in grateful awe before the miracle of forgiveness, to receive it, and to take from it a new, regenerated life.” (Brueg. 295)
- “I will write it upon their hearts”: closely recalls Deut. 6:6 (the Shema)—“these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart”
 - “The concern in the Old Testament passages, in contrast to what emerged later in Christian thinking, was not for a law that could be summarized in certain succinct, fundamental principles. Rather it was **for an obedient attitude towards the law.**” (Cle. 191)
- Although the covenant is ‘new’, it stands in continuity with the ‘old’ one (not a new law, but a new way of knowing and living in relationship to it)

Music / hymnody associations and ideas (in no particular order):

- Ps. 111 & 112: Alleluia! Laud and Blessing (WEISSE FLAGGEN) – GTG 755
- Ps 98: New Songs of Celebration Render (RENDEZ À DIEU) – GTG 371
- The Days Are Surely Coming (LLANGLOFFAN) – GTG 357
- Great Is Thy Faithfulness (FAITHFULNESS) – NCH 423
- Ps 119: I Long for Your Commandments (WOHL DENEN, DIE DA WANDELN) – GTG 64
- Like a Mother Who Has Borne Us (AUSTIN) – NCH 583
- O Day of Peace that Dimly Shines (JERUSALEM) – GTG 373
- All My Hope on God is Founded (MICHAEL) – NCH 408 (*Note, Chalice has this set with NEANDER/UNSER HERRISCHER*)
- Your word O Lord is gentle dew (AF HIMLENS) – LBW 232
- O God, Who Gives Us Life (NOEL) – GTG 53
- Spirit, Open My Heart (WILD MOUNTAIN THYME) – GTG 692
- “Order My Steps” by Glen Burleigh – see LUYH 758: gospel piece, probably for choir rather than cong. (arrangements?)
- In My Life (Lord, Be Glorified) – GTG 468
- Lead Us from Death to Life (WORLD PEACE PRAYER) – NCH 581 (*closing, probably*)
- Bless God, O My Soul (SPRING WOODS) – NCH 549
- Teach Me, O Lord, Your Holy Way (ROCKINGHAM) – NCH 465
- Let Us Hope When Hope Seems Hopeless – NCH 461
- Be Thou My Vision (SLANE) – GTG 450

Citations and abbreviations key

Commentaries:

- “Brueg.”: Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998)
- “Cle.”: R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1988)

Hymnals / Music sources:

- **Chalice** – *Chalice Hymnal*, ©1995 Chalice Press
- **GTG** – *Glory to God: Hymns, Psalms and Spiritual Songs* (a.k.a. *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal*), ©2013 Westminster John Knox Press
- **LBW** – *Lutheran Book of Worship*, ©1978, admin. Augsburg Fortress
- **LUYH** – *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, ©2013 Faith Alive Christian Resources
- **NCH** – *The New Century Hymnal*, ©1995 Pilgrim Press
- **PfAS** – *Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship*, pub. 2012 Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Brazos Press; ©2012 Faith Alive Christian Resources
- **Pilgrim** – *The Pilgrim Hymnal*, ©1958 Pilgrim Press
- **Sing Prayer and Praise** - *Sing! Prayer and Praise: A New Praise and Worship Music Song Book for Pastors, Musicians and Worship Leaders*, ©2009 Pilgrim Press