*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 14 - 19

“Jeremiah”

**Monday, August 14 Jeremiah 1:1-19**

*“I set you apart”*

 This first chapter of Jeremiah is an account of his call and appointment to prophesy. It includes two divine visions assuring the prophet that God is with him as he delivers a word of judgment to Judah. God’s choice of Jeremiah for this task was made by God before Jeremiah was born. The phrase translated as “set apart” is a representation of a Hebrew verb whose basic meaning is to be holy. Holiness can be a property of a substance, that is, whether it is clean or unclean. Holiness can also be related to ethical activity and to spiritual dedication. But, whatever it may be related to, to be “set apart” assumes that what God designates as holy is appointed by God for a particular task.

 To put it differently, to be holy is something that God makes a person or a thing. The person or the thing does not make itself holy. God’s choice of Jeremiah, his designation of him as prophet, is the reason he is made holy. It is not the other way around, as if Jeremiah’s moral and spiritual attributes have somehow earned him the honor of being God’s prophet.

*Through Jesus Christ, Father, you have set me apart to serve you: I am holy. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 15 Jeremiah 11:18-23**

*“I did not realize that they had plotted against me”*

 In these verses we encounter the prophet’s prayerful reaction to persecution, including his anger and despair. In the account of his call (see chapter 1), the prophet was told that persecution and opposition would come to him. His only protection was God’s promise to watch over him and the word he would deliver. The fact that God called Jeremiah to a prophetic task did not mean that he was exempt from the doubts and depressions that strike those who engage in stressful ministry.

 Jeremiah is shown the true intentions of neighbors from his hometown of Anathoth (a short distance north of Jerusalem). God reveals to him that they intend to humiliate him and to bring his prophetic work to an end. In fact, the phrase “cut him off from the land of the living” (verse 19) indicates murder, as does the threat of verse 21. Jeremiah describes himself as a lamb led to slaughter, implying that he is innocent of any wrongdoing. Jeremiah’s predicament is not God’s judgment on him but the plot of others who oppose his message and seek to harm him.

*Watch over and protect me, Lord, from those who oppose your word. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 16 Jeremiah 12:1-6**

*“I would speak with you about your justice”*

 The case that Jeremiah brings to God in prayer is not just that of threat to his life; it is also the question of why a righteous God allows the way of the wicked to prosper. If God is so clearly opposed to the activity of the wicked, then why not judge them and be done with it? Jeremiah prays for the destruction of the wicked because of the harm they have brought and asks that they (instead of he) be taken away like sheep for the slaughter.

 God’s reply (in verses 5 and 6) does not deal with the larger question of evil’s prosperity or even the more restricted question of immediate judgment on those who oppose Jeremiah. Instead, God calls the prophet to keep to the task at hand. In order to do so, Jeremiah needs to realize that if ministry has tired him out up to this point in his career as a prophet (he’s “worn out” racing with men and he “stumbles” in safe country), how will he be able to hold up when things get even tougher (when he will have to “compete” with horses and “manage in the thickets by the Jordan”)? He will have to rely on God’s strength, not his own.

*When I am worn out, Lord, I look to you for strength. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 14 - 19

“Jeremiah”

**Thursday, August 17 Jeremiah 20:1-18**

 *“Terror on every side”*

 Pashur, the priest who orders Jeremiah beaten and placed in the stocks, represents the religious establishment. The humiliation of being placed in the stocks and beaten by a priest may have been especially galling for Jeremiah, since he too is from a priestly family. Upon his release, Jeremiah gives Pashur a new name, “Magor-Missabib,” which in Hebrew means “terror all around.” This term is used elsewhere by the prophet to describe the plight of Judah when the enemy from the north attacks the nation and its capital city.

 Jeremiah’s lament is linked to his humiliating and painful experience in the stocks. His persecutors lie in wait to ambush him and ridicule him with his own phrase, “terror on every side” (verse 10), as if to say that Jeremiah is a deluded madman who speaks incessantly about terror to come. Jeremiah’s frustration with God comes from the fact that Pashur, priest of God (!), had spoken against him and humiliated him in public. Had not God promised to be with Jeremiah and to protect him? Yet God’s own official representative has carried out this attack on him.

*Protect me, Lord, from those who ridicule me for speaking your Word. Amen.*

**Friday, August 18 Jeremiah 29:1-14**

*“I know the plans I have for you”*

 Jeremiah writes a letter to the Judean community in Babylonian exile, that is, to those Judeans taken into exile with King Jehoiachin in 597BC. Several false prophets and diviners among the Judean exiles have deceived the community with announcements of the imminent demise of Babylon and a quick return of the exiles to Judah. Jeremiah makes it clear that the sovereignty God has granted Babylon over the exiles has several decades to run and only then will there be a return to their homeland. So, they are to settle down in Babylon and pray for the peace and prosperity of the city for, if it prospers, they too will prosper. They are to live their lives in that foreign city as graciously as they are able, and in his time God will bring them back from captivity.

 Jeremiah makes it clear that the future of the people in exile rests on God’s gracious promise, which he describes as plans that God has for the people, plans for a peace that provides a future and a hope. A tangible element of the future consists in the restoration of the people to Judah. The restoration, however, is predicated on their seeking God with their whole heart.

*You have invited me to come and receive forgiveness, Lord, and I have come. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 19 Lamentations 3:19-27**

*“Great is your faithfulness”*

 Memory plays an important role in Jeremiah’s lament. Sometimes the prophet asks God to remember and sometimes he himself recalls the previous deeds of the Lord. Both suffering and redemption are part of Jeremiah’s experience, and he sets their memories side by side. God is the source not only of judgment but also of deliverance. Since he knows that God is strong to save, he has hope which means he is waiting with expectancy.

 One of the great Hebrew words of the Old Testament, *hesed,* is used in verse 22. It is often translated as the “great love” of the Lord. While love is not a wrong translation, the term also carries the meaning of kindness and loyalty. *Hesed* is the kind of act that is not required by civil law but springs from the concerned character of the one who acts. Closely related to the term *hesed* is that of compassion(s) – *rahmim.* The best analogy is that of parental concern, for in the singular *rehem* can mean womb. Finally, Jeremiah confesses that God is great in faithfulness (*muna*). We can always count on God to be faithful to his promises.

*Every day, Lord, your love, compassion and faithfulness sustain me. Amen.*