*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 27 – June 1

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, May 27 Jeremiah 1:1-19**

*“The Lord gave me this message”*

Like most prophetic books, Jeremiah begins with a heading indicating the time of the prophet’s ministry. Dates in Judah were reckoned in accordance with the reign of a monarch, a common procedure in the ancient world. The forty plus years given for Jeremiah’s ministry (627-584BC) cover some of the most tumultuous and tragic events of the nation’s history. Included among them were rebellions against foreign control, the death of Judean kings at the hands of foreign powers, and the demise and virtual destruction of the nation itself.

The rest of the chapter contains an account of Jeremiah’s call and appointment to prophesy (vv. 4-10), followed by two divine visions (vv. 11-12; 13-19) assuring the prophet that God is with him as he delivers a difficult word to Judah. The account of God’s call to Jeremiah is not meant as a model of God’s call to believers in the sense that we should all seek an experience with God like that of Jeremiah. Rather, we are asked to trust Jeremiah’s experience of God as instructive for us.

*By your Spirit, Lord, may Jeremiah’s book increase my spiritual understanding. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 28 Jeremiah 2:1-19**

*“Listen to the word of the Lord”*

The thrust and tenor of the prophetic messages in this chapter are common to the book of Jeremiah. Like an introductory paragraph for an essay, Jeremiah’s initial words set the tone and suggest that the chapter is intended to function as a “sampler” of topics that reappear time and again in the book. The overall thrust of the messages is to paint God’s people in their totality as rebellious against the One who brought them into existence.

The nation is reminded of her beginnings as the young bride of the Lord, but now she has defected from her first love in order to pursue worthless idols. Judah’s priests are singled out for particular criticism. They had the sacred task of interpreting God’s presence and will among the people but, instead of seeking inspiration from the Lord and his sacred word, they sought it from Baal. The tragic example of Israel (the northern kingdom) which had been conquered by the Assyrians about 100 years before serves to highlight the precarious position of Jeremiah’s contemporaries in Judah (the southern kingdom).

*This is your word, Lord, and I will listen. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 29 Jeremiah 2:20-37**

*“You have prostituted yourselves by bowing down to idols”*

Because of their defection from the Lord, the people are depicted through a personification of Jerusalem as a prostitute. By analogy she/they are also like animals in heat that are unrestrained in seeking a mate. The valley mentioned in verse 23 – where the people seek the Baals – is likely the Valley of Hinnom, which runs on the southern and western sides of the city of Jerusalem. It is also the probably site of child sacrifice to Molech.

Apparently some among the people have accused God of negligence, while God, through the agency of prophets, has accused the people of defection. The people are also accused of forgetting God. Modern readers should not take this charge as implying that memory of God has faded in Judah. Forgetting is associated with not honoring God or with being disobedient, just as remembering is associated with doing what God expects. If one “remembers,” one will act appropriately; thus, forgetting is tantamount to an inappropriate or nonresponsive act.

*May I never forget you, Lord, and so become disobedient. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 27 – June 1

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, May 30 Jeremiah 3:1-18**

*“Would you now return to me?”*

Jerusalem, representing the people of Judah, is the spouse who has married many lovers in her defection from the Lord. As a result she has become estranged from her first husband and incapable of mending the relationship. Jeremiah then compares the fate and infidelity of Israel to the circumstances of Judah. Israel and Judah are described as sisters who have both committed adultery against their spouse. Surprisingly, Judah has learned nothing from the hundred-year-ago fall of Israel to the Assyrians.

The analogy of Judah as an adulterous wife is then changed to that of wayward children; both analogies are part of a root metaphor that identifies the people as the household/family of the Lord. Looking to the future, a form of exile and resulting loss of land is assumed, but God will restore, bringing back the prodigal children and establishing them in their homeland (and in his household/family). Remnants from both Israel and Judah will inhabit the restored city and surrounding land.

*Through your Son, Father, you have brought us back to yourself. Amen.*

**Friday, May 31 Jeremiah 3:19 – 4:2**

*“I would love to treat you as my own children”*

Jeremiah offers no simplistic preaching of repentance, as if one simply calls the people to change, and by their own efforts they do so. It is God himself who will need to bring about change among his people, and the discipline of judgment is a part of that process.

Jesus’ public ministry too was marked by explicit calls for repentance and reminders of the cost of disobedience. Like Jeremiah, Jesus’ call for repentance was not about change for change’s sake but for the sake of knowing God and the joy of obedience to his revealed will. Like Jeremiah, Jesus spoke to a generation of God’s people who had heard the word of the Lord but who had not responded. Moreover, Jesus’ proclamation too was ignored by some and heard by others, with a result that the audiences of both would become examples for readers of God’s word. Finally, like the proclamation of Jeremiah to his audience, Jesus taught that what God demands by way of repentance and reorientation is something he graciously enables, “because the Lord disciplines those he loves.”

*I repent of my sin, Lord, that you may change me. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 1 Jeremiah 4:3-31**

*“Change your heart before the Lord”*

Judah and Jerusalem are called to assemble, to put on sackcloth, and to lament the approach of the foe from the north. The approach of this enemy is in reality the approach of the Lord, who comes against the people like a lion or whose blast of anger is like a searing wind. The prophet beseeches Jerusalem to cleanse her heart and remove her wicked thoughts. Those who would besiege her are coming, for her own conduct and actions have brought about these appalling circumstances.

In his own heart Jeremiah expresses horror at the realization of Jerusalem’s impending doom. In striking fashion his emotional reaction to this doom is translated into the physical reaction of “writhing in pain” (verse 19). God will speak and judgment will come, just as surely as in the creation account God spoke and order was brought out of chaos. Even the earth will “mourn” as the folly and failure of the people affect more than their historical circumstances; it extends to their whole cultural and environmental setting.

*You bring judgment, Lord, for you will not ignore our sin. Amen.*