

Jeremiah – “I have plans for you!”

Underwear, cistern, garbage dumps! Jeremiah would be the inspiration for many object sermons to come, but Stewardship Sermons? Oh yes. Jeremiah instigated those clever object lessons that we often use for the children’s message. Jerusalem is in shambles and God’s people discouraged. They are cracked pots and so Jeremiah goes to the potter to proclaim God’s words.

Jeremiah descends from Abiathar; Abiathar and Zadok were chief priests during David’s reign. After David, Zadok backed the winner Solomon, while Abiathar supported Adonijah. Consequently, Abiathar was sent away to Anathoth and Zadok took religious power. Therefore, it is not surprising when Jeremiah criticizes the Judean kings and the religious personnel who surrounded the king.

Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry around 627 BC continuing through the captivity of Babylon in 587 BC. He would survive the last of the kings, remnant of a better time while the majority of God’s people were taken into slavery to Babylon.

During the reign of kings Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, Israel was caught in the web of a power struggle of the dominate nations, Assyria, Babylon and Egypt. Look at a map and see how geographically Israel lands between the crossfire.

King Josiah discovers the scrolls of Deuteronomy 621 BC and he institutes new reforms. He struggles to re-establish the monarchy and eventually he was killed in Megiddo battling the Egyptians. The Egyptians put a puppet king, Jehoiakim who brought back the worship of foreign gods.

Jehoiakim burns Jeremiah’s scroll that predicted Babylon would conquer and will serve as God’s instrument of punishment. Nebuchadnezzar invaded in 598 BC and placed Zedekiah as a puppet king who charged heavy taxes.

Jeremiah encouraged paying off Babylon and thus was considered a traitor. He was beaten and imprisoned. Zedekiah signed an agreement with Egypt and tried to break with Babylon, but Babylon angered and killed the king’s sons, blinded the king, and exiled the people for two generations.

Jeremiah remains in Jerusalem. Rebels kill Babylon’s ruler in Jerusalem. Jeremiah still considered a traitor, is no longer heard from. King Cyrus of Persia will defeat the Babylonians and allow the exiles to return home around 532 BC. Rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple will take many years.

Stewardship is a faithful response that God has plans that might occur over time. We might ponder the glory year of Christianity in America as the post WW2 years through the 90s, but God’s timeframe expands over centuries. Like the past people of God, we must be steadfast in our hope of a future designed by God. We will discover Jeremiah’s words instructive for our context listening for hope and a future proclaimed.