



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sermon Series: Dark Prophet Part 2

Sermon Title: How to Move Past Fear

Speaker/ Date: Armin Sommer/ January 27, 2019

Jeremiah 1:4-19

God asked Jeremiah to do something he knew he could not: to confront the evil culture in which he lived. He preached 42 years, largely without results. He was a young man born into a nation that as a whole really didn't care much what God had to say. There were certainly times when Jeremiah thought he'd rather opt out.

There is generally an enormous gap between what we think we can do and what God calls us to do. God doesn't call us because we're qualified. He calls us in order to qualify us.

God tells Jeremiah that his task is to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant. God offers Jeremiah 2 visions that will sustain him throughout the 42 years of his ministry: an almond branch and a boiling pot. Each communicates a message for him and us.

I. The Almond Branch: God Sees Us

The first tree to bloom in springtime in the middle east is the almond tree. It blooms before its leaves begin to show. It's the first tree to bloom, but also the last to offer its fruit. When people watch for signs of spring, they watch for the white almond blossoms. The almond blossom is the promise of what is to come. Symbolizes here God's promise to be make all He has said come true.

The Heb word almond (shaqed) and the verb watching (shoqed) are nearly identical. It's like God is saying, "Watch for it, Jeremiah. Keep your eyes on me, because my eyes are you and your situation. The fulfillment of my word is as certain as the coming springtime." So for the rest of his life every spring he would anticipate the fulfillment of God's promises just around the corner. And every time he heard the common word "watching" he was reminded that God sees him. **Psalm 33:18 ,Psalm 34:15**

The Lord offers to Jeremiah a 2nd vision. **Jeremiah 1:13**

II. The Boiling Pot: God, not evil, is in control

The vision is of a large cauldron used for cooking or washing that is placed directly on a bed of glowing coals fanned by the wind. God is tipping the pot and its contents are spilling from the north (Babylonian territory) toward the south (Israelite territory). God was about to raise up a new terrifying enemy – Babylon – which He would use as an instrument of judgment against His idolatrous people who lived in the southern Kingdom (Judah). Because the southern kingdom had descended into all manner of horrendous idolatries - to the point that they performed infant sacrifices. God would use Babylonian conquerors as His agents for carrying out His judgment against the inhabitants of Judah

God sometimes uses ungodly people to inflict discipline on His own people when they disobey. **1 Peter 4:17**

We rarely hear this portion of scripture cited today because it doesn't sound positive. **2 Timothy 4:2-3**

This 2nd vision is of terrifying judgment. But it also has a positive side to it. The evil that grips our culture is not beyond the control of God. He even turns evil to achieve His good purposes.

Two visions provide the broad context for what God does. The almond tree tells us that God's word is always on the verge of fulfillment. The boiling pot reminds us that, even though we live in perilous times, the peril has limits.

Evil is not in control. God is. Use that truth to keep your balance on the sharp edge of hope, to resist the attempts of evil to intimidate you.

The result... **Jeremiah 1:17-19**

The words to Jeremiah are reminiscent of the word God gave to Joshua nearly a thousand years earlier. **Deuteronomy 31:6,8**

Jeremiah faced mockery, beatings, and the threat of death. But he lived a life utterly impervious to that intense persecution and opposition. God is looking for people of such courage today... to be Jeremiahs in a day when people prefer to whispers of sweetness and light, instead of pulpits that thunder with truth.

Discussion Questions:

- **What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?**
- **Jeremiah preached 42 years, largely without results. What emotions (if any) do you think he struggled with during that time? Why do you think he continued with his ministry if the outward results were so minimal? How do we evaluate the effectiveness of a preacher of church today? Do you think there are preachers today who are in God's will yet they see minimal results?**
- **Is there a situation in your life right now where you feel unqualified to fulfill the task? Does this statement change your perspective? "God doesn't call us because we're qualified. He calls us in order to qualify us." Explain.**
- **God is always watching us. How does (or should) this affect your daily actions?**
- **Is there any area of your life where you might be on the verge of serving a false god? Money? Popularity? The "likes" of others on social media? Sex? What are the consequences someone might experience by serving a false god? What false god does our culture serve?**
- **Explain a time when you had a situation where you displayed an act of courage. Have you ever witnessed an act of courage by someone else? What were the positive or negative outcomes?**
- **God sends judgment in the form of Babylon upon the Israelites for their continued disobedience. Is there any positive messages that the Israelites can take from being disciplined? Consider: [Proverbs 3:12](#), [Hebrews 12:6](#), [Revelation 3:19](#)**