

THE WEEPING PROPHET

“Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.” —PSALM 126:6

Jeremiah is known as the “Weeping Prophet”, and is one of the Major Prophets, having written two books: Jeremiah, followed by Lamentations, which means weeping or a cry of sorrow and grief.

A man of melancholic temperament, Jeremiah needed friendship. He talks about the warmth of sitting by an open fire, lighted candles, and was the prophet who asked God more questions about ‘why’ than any other prophet. He would have wanted to marry, but God said to him, “You must not marry and have sons or daughters in this place” (Jeremiah 16:2). Marrying and having children would have sent a message that Jeremiah believed in the future, but the message God wanted to send was that Judah is coming to an end. Jeremiah was told to not even attend parties or feastings, because that would give the impression there was something to celebrate when Judah was going to be destroyed, because of the people’s evil and idolatrous ways.

Jeremiah carried that as a deeply embedded pain in his heart, but in his loneliness and isolation, he could speak in a way he never could have had he been married with a loving family. Called to the burdening task of announcing the destruction of the kingdom of Judah, Jeremiah’s message was that sin offends God. He was

required to wear a wooden yoke around his neck, demonstrating that Judah was going to be yoked to Babylon. A false prophet broke it off, but God had Jeremiah replace it with an iron yoke. Persecuted, shunned, mocked and frequently imprisoned, Jeremiah was relentless in his calling from God.

One would not argue that this was not a life of pain and suffering. Jeremiah reveals what would have been harder for him. He writes, “Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long. But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot” (Jeremiah 20:8-9).

For Jeremiah, God was ultimate, and though timid by nature, he received the Lord’s assurance that he would become strong and courageous. God’s frequent affirmations of his divine calling as a prophet made him fearless and faithful. What we learn from Jeremiah’s story is that when our love for God and His will are paramount in our lives, there is nothing we need fear, because God Himself becomes our means, our strength, our great reward. And nothing less than what He has called us to do will satisfy.

PRAYER: Precious Lord, grant me that fire in my bones like Jeremiah, and use me, Lord, I pray.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I have a burning desire to serve God?