

Wednesday, August 30, 2017 - Day 241 – Jeremiah 1-3, Psalm 47, Hebrews 3

“Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a child.” Jeremiah 1:6

The call of Jeremiah is read at the ordination of deacons. God tells Jeremiah that he is long awaited, that even before he was born God had consecrated him and appointed him to be a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah was to be the bearer of bad news – a prophet. A prophet is not someone who sees the future. A prophet is someone who sees deeply into the present and tells people, particularly people in power, what will happen if they don't change. The role of the prophet is not pleasant. No one likes people who tell them that if they don't change their ways bad things are going to happen. These folks are spoiling the fun. It's much easier to hate and discredit them than to take seriously what they are saying. And Jeremiah, understandably enough, looks for ways to avoid this job.

“Ah, Lord God! Truly I don't know how to speak, for I am only a child,” he says to God in response to God's call. Too bad. God says, “... you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.” But God also makes a promise. “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you.” Notice the promise doesn't say that they will not hate you, nor does it say they will not hurt you. Jeremiah is famous for his lamentations – his songs of grief and sorrow – as his people turn against him and as his nation falls into ruin.

Who are the prophets of our time? Who are the unwelcome messengers telling us that if we don't change we will suffer the consequences. The most renowned prophet of recent history is Dr. Martin Luther King, who insisted on speaking and acting against the racism that pervades and plagues the United States. He told us that racism against African American people is undermining our community and our peace. And we can see that he was right. More recently, Al Gore, Bill McKibbin and scientific communities throughout the world are telling us that if we don't change the way we power our cities and communities, we will suffer environmental disaster. As with any prophet, many people refuse to listen.

It seems to me that, in our time, there is a pervasive sense of doom, an awareness that the way we are living is not sustainable, in terms of climate, in terms of economics, in terms of the health and well-being of living creatures. And while many of us are frozen in fear, or drowning in distraction or soothing ourselves with cynicism, the prophets are speaking up. They are telling us that we have to change and what we have to change.

The good news, and the bad news, is that God calls all of us to be prophets. In our own lives, when we see what is wrong, what is unsustainable, what is done out of blindness and greed – God calls us to speak up... to speak what God commands... to tell the truth. This will not make us popular. It might even cost us friends and opportunities. And God will be with us – to accompany us and to love us. That's a promise.

By The Ven. Pamela Nesbit