



Jeremiah: Set Apart
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are beginning our new series called **Running with the Horses**. Sounds like a strange title, doesn't it? But God used this phrase when speaking to the prophet Jeremiah and He is speaking it to us today. If we are worn out in the footrace we are running in this world, what makes us think we can be successful in a spiritual race against our enemy, Satan without a total commitment to our almighty God? **Jeremiah: Set Apart** is about a man from whose life we can learn a great deal about living beyond our natural abilities and in obedience to God.

SCRIPTURE¹

Jeremiah 12:5 (**The Message**) "So, Jeremiah, if you're *worn out* in this footrace with *men*, what makes you think you can *race against horses*? And if you can't keep your wits during times of calm, what's going to happen when troubles break loose like the Jordan in flood?"

Jeremiah 1:1 The words of *Jeremiah* son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin.

Jeremiah 1:4-10 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I *knew you*, before you were born I *set you apart*; I *appointed you* as a prophet to the nations." Alas, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am *too young*." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be *afraid* of them, for I am *with you* and will *rescue you*," declares the Lord. Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, today I *appoint you* over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

Jeremiah 1:17-19 (NIV) "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. *Do not* be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a *fortified city*, an *iron pillar* and a *bronze wall* to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am *with you* and will *rescue you*," declares the Lord.

Genesis 1:27 So God created mankind in his *own image*, in the *image of God* he created them; male and female he created them.

OBSERVATION

After the reign of Solomon, King David's son, the country of Israel was split into a Northern (Israel) and Southern Kingdom (Judah). In the time of the prophecies of Jeremiah, 627 B. C. to 586 B. C., Judah was in its final days. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had laid siege to Jerusalem and demanded tribute from the King Zedekiah, or he would take the entire country into exile. Jeremiah warned the King to pay the tribute, but he wouldn't listen.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

It was the most confusing and chaotic period of Judah's history. God had called Jeremiah to warn the people, but not only was no one listening to him, his family and nation had rejected him. Despite his despair, his heartache, he never compromised his calling or gave in to his culture or settled for a comfortable life. Because of Jeremiah's commitment to God, he was mocked and persecuted and there was tremendous pressure on him to quit or hide. Jeremiah didn't do any of those things - he persevered and obeyed God. He rose above the fray and **ran with the horses**.

Nebuchadnezzar followed through with his threat in 586 BC and destroyed the Temple taking its golden artifacts and leading the Israelites to a 70-year exile in Babylon.² Our culture has been tumultuous and turbulent these last several years, too. Through it all, God is calling us to a higher purpose regardless of the associated persecution – and it seems He is sending the same message He sent to Jeremiah to us today.

QUESTION: Is God calling you to a higher purpose? Why do you think so?

APPLICATION

God had a big plan for Jeremiah's life, but first He had to speak into his true identity. There was a divine appointment coming, but Jeremiah had reservations. He said, "I am too young and don't know how to speak." (Just as Moses said to God, "I am a stutterer – how can I speak to the Pharaoh?") We also feel inadequate and fear the unknown, failure and hatred by other people. So, God speaks to us, saying, "I know you feel inadequate, but I will make you unmovable like a bronze wall. I will be with you and rescue you." But first God must talk to us about our true identity.

QUESTION: When has God called you to obey Him and you gave Him an excuse for not obeying?

Identity is a core value of our culture – it is being true to ourselves. Unfortunately, we define ourselves by **1) What we do**. It's all about success and achievement; **2) What we have**. The nicer our car or house, compared to those of other people, makes us feel better than they are; **3) What we have done**. Rather than what has been done for us, we feel pride over what we have done – good or bad. We may be ashamed of our past and a stronghold from those days is still an anchor in our life; and **4) What we desire**. There are all kinds of challenges if we decide our identity is wrapped up in our desires.

QUESTION: How do you define yourself today?

QUESTION: What is the something in your past that defines you?

God created us in His image. Before we were conceived, **God knew us**. We were **set apart and chosen** - He **appointed** us for His purposes. From the very beginning God defined our identities. We are created in God's image and that is the foundation of our identity.

QUESTION: How do you define "image of God"?

QUESTION: What about you is in the image of God?

Sometimes we have competing identities and have to decide which of them is truer. Maybe some of us think Christianity is all about behavior modification – that is if we behave correctly God will accept us. But when our identity is found in Christ we are already accepted. His scriptures tell us so: **2 Corinthians says we are new creations; Ephesians 1:5 We are adopted; Ephesians 1:12 says we are chosen; John 1:12: We are children of God; Colossians 2:10 says we are God's handiwork and complete in Christ; Romans 8:38 tells us we are more than conquerors; and John 3:18 we are loved**. When we speak these truths to ourselves, we become aware of our new identities in Christ.

QUESTION: Why don't you read through these Scriptures as you pray today? When you read them, what do you feel about your place in God's Kingdom? Are you still feeling inadequate or fearful? Why?

QUESTION: Which of these Scriptures is speaking to you and changing what you perceive to be your identity?

² Jeremiah 52:1-27

God has greater plans for us than we can possibly envision for ourselves. There is a race ahead of us if we have the faith, trust in God's promises, courage and love for people that Jesus models for us. Why would any of us want to be left out of such a blessed future?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Scriptures which tell us we are forgiven, redeemed and complete as Your handiwork. Give us the courage to join in the challenges You have for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

QUESTION

QUESTION: Is God calling you to a higher purpose? Why do you think so?

QUESTION: When has God called you to obey Him and you gave Him an excuse for not obeying?

QUESTION: How do you define yourself today?

QUESTION: What is the something in your past that defines you?

QUESTION: How do you define "image of God"?

QUESTION: What about you is in the image of God?

QUESTION: Why don't you read through these Scriptures as you pray today? When you read them, what are you feeling about your place in God's Kingdom? Are you still feeling inadequate or fearful? Why?

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