

The Preacher to the Exiles

Jeremiah 1:1-3:5

12/13/15

Randy Lovelace

And now for something a little different. A little different, I mean, by the way we're going to read this morning's passage and how it's going to be preached. This is the first of three to four sermons—haven't fully decided yet whether there's going to be a fourth—but certainly the first of three sermons on the Book of Jeremiah.

This morning's passage is perhaps the longest passage that has been read in CPC's history. So we're going to do things a little differently. First, P.D. Mayfield, Pastor P.D., is going to come and he's going to read chapter one of Jeremiah. Then I will preach my first point. Then I will read chapter two, and I will read my second point. And then Robbie Pennington will come and read chapter three, verses one through five, and then I will finish by preaching my third point.

However, today you will not see the passages projected before you on the screens. The reasons for that is because these were prophecies that were read aloud—not first read by eyes silently. They were meant to be heard audibly and absorbed. And I recognize for some that may be difficult, and so we broke it up instead of reading it all at once. I will tell you it is a difficult passage, but it is a passage that points us to the hope of Christ which we celebrate in this season. And now hear the Word of the Lord. P.D.?

[P.D. Mayfield:] The reading of God's Word from the prophet Jeremiah.

The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2 to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” But the Lord said to me,

“Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;
for to all to whom I send you, you shall go,
and whatever I command you, you shall speak.
Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
declares the Lord.”

Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me,

“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to break down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.”

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see an almond branch.” Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.”

The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.” Then the Lord said to me, “Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands. But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, 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 they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you.”

Thus ends this reading of the Word.

[Randy Lovelace:] We’re going to have to work on this microphone thing, right? I work with a giant. May the Lord bless the preaching of his Word. You have the calling of Jeremiah. In this first chapter, you hear the calling of Jeremiah, and in that calling there are very clearly three things that come to Jeremiah as a result. Everything the Lord says in this calling is enveloped by his promises.

There are two promises which stick out greatly in the passage, and the first is: “I knew you.” Before you were born, I knew you. This is important for Jeremiah, because Jeremiah himself was reluctant. He was fearful. He considered his age. And so what he was beginning to do is he was beginning to see the world in a closed system, birth to death, infancy to wisdom. Yet the Lord—that is not how he looks at time. He looks at time from all eternity according and from the perspective of his will and his sovereign purposes, and he looks at Jeremiah—as the psalmist says as well, and we can proclaim as those who are created as human beings marked with the image of God—that God does not look at us merely by our years on this earth, but rather, he looks at us through eternity. And he looks at Jeremiah, and he says, “I knew you.”

And if he knows Jeremiah, he then envelopes that truth with this other promise: “I am with you.” For he’s about to put words in Jeremiah’s mouth that are difficult words. In fact, this is what Jeremiah would be known as: the weeping prophet. We see the very clear beginning of Jeremiah’s ministry, but we have no idea how he dies. He goes off into the mist, carried off into Egypt, at the end of the book. Jeremiah’s life was one that was full of difficulty and suffering in the name of the Lord. Towards his own people, he would be called a prophet, and yet his life would be sought after. His life would be under threat of death not once, not twice, but over three times. His ministry would stretch forty years, under multiple kings. How is it that Jeremiah, a man who at first was reticent and difficult and fearful—but this is what the Lord was calling him to, was this promise: “I am with you.” That is God’s promise to Jeremiah’s calling.

And secondly, in this calling we see a touch. The passage says clearly here that he would touch—by the arm of the Lord, he reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “Now I have put

my words in your mouth.” Similar to what the Lord would do with Isaiah. Isaiah would say, “My lips are unclean. I live among a people of unclean lips.” And yet the Lord would touch his lips.

Now, one might say, isn’t it interesting how God’s calling on Jeremiah’s life is unique? Okay. He calls him, he gives him these promises, “I am with you,” “I have known you before your birth,” and, “I will reach out my hand and touch your mouth.” Wouldn’t it be nice if the Lord would make our calling so clear? And so what happens a lot of the time is we read these Old Testament passages, and we look back, and we say, “That seems so far away. Wouldn’t it be cool if God would do that today?” I’m grateful for the Old Testament scholar Derek Kidner who says not only does God still do that—he does it in ways that Jeremiah could never have imagined. Consider Kidner’s thoughts on this specific part of God’s touching of Jeremiah’s life. He says:

We could wish, perhaps, that we, too, were given something as tangible as this, along with God’s spoken promises. But we are. He, like a friend who puts an encouraging and affectionate hand on one’s shoulder, has added touch to speech. “You were washed...”; “Take, eat..., drink...” His are no arm’s length dealings; and when sight and hearing fail us, he still keeps open his pre-arranged signals for us.

For the Lord’s Word is written for us. The Lord’s Word has been preserved by his Holy Spirit. And when his Word is read, when his Word is taken into your hearts, you need to know, this is the Lord speaking to you just as he did Jeremiah. And when we celebrate this at church—baptism or the Lord’s Supper—it is a picture of what the Lord has done by his Holy Spirit.

For by the springs of living water our sins are washed away through the blood of Christ. And we take a cup, and we drink it as the cup of the new covenant in my blood. When we take of that bread and we eat it, it is the body of the Lord given for you, and we take it into our mouths. And this would be the Lord’s sign to his disciples that—what? “I will be with you always. I will neither leave you nor forsake you. I will not leave you as orphans.” And, indeed, the Lord has done that. If you profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he has come to you. He has come to you by his Word. He has come to you through his presence of his Holy Spirit. And he’s come to you, to your very mouth, with the symbols of his provision.

The Lord touched Jeremiah, enveloped with promise. But then he gave him two signs. These two signs, first, was the almond tree, as you heard read. It’s an important sign, because the almond tree is the first to bud in spring. It is referred to in some ways as “the watcher over the spring.” In fact, the word *almond* itself and the Hebrew word for *watching*—there is a word play going on here in the first chapter of Jeremiah, because the Hebrew word for *watching* and *almond* are very much alike and can be easily confused. But the Lord means it not for confusion, but as a sign. He says, “Do you see the almond tree? It’s the first to bud in spring.” And he says to him, “I watch over you.” And he says, “I will see that my word is fulfilled.” The sign is: while we can’t always see it, as the almond buds in spring, the Lord says, “I will watch that my word is fulfilled.” It is the sovereign hand of God.

But there is another sign, and it is the sign of the boiling caldron pouring out of the north. It says “away from the north,” meaning—see, at this point, Israel has been split into two for over two hundred years: Israel to the north, Judah to the south. Judah being the smallest and a little more impoverished than the north, but Judah contained Jerusalem. Israel, the northern kingdom, had already been conquered in 722. And now that conquering army, at the time, Syria, would now be as a boiling pot pouring out of the north onto the south.

This is important, because it is meant to be a warning to Judah, because Judah has failed to do something very important, and that was to watch Israel as an example. Israel, its sister, even though they had warred against one another, they were still united. They were still Israel, God’s people. And yet Judah, having watched Israel, the northern kingdom, in its failing to follow the Lord and its taking on gods, being conquered by foreign people, failed to watch as an example and to return to the Lord. And now God would say to Jeremiah, “This is what is going to happen. A boiling caldron pouring out of the north.”

But what would that look like? Why? You recall over the last number of weeks, we've been looking at together the Word in Ezekiel. And now we pass on to Jeremiah. Ezekiel, if you remember, as I mentioned a couple of weeks ago—he was ministering to the exiles in Israel, in the northern kingdom, now overtaken by the Assyrians. Jeremiah was left in Jerusalem. And what he was doing is he was telling them why. And you recall, we were looking at comparing what the Scriptures said regarding the great difficulty of Sodom and its judgment. And yet the Lord said, "Your sins make Sodom look righteous." Why would God put into the lips of Jeremiah this difficult message? And that comes because of the betrayal of love. Chapter two, now, of Jeremiah, as we continue to look at the drama of what God was doing.

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem,
Thus says the Lord,

"I remember the devotion of your youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.
Israel was holy to the Lord,
the firstfruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it incurred guilt;
disaster came upon them,
declares the Lord."

Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. Thus says the Lord:

"What wrong did your fathers find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?
They did not say, 'Where is the Lord
who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep darkness,
in a land that none passes through,
where no man dwells?'
And I brought you into a plentiful land
to enjoy its fruits and its good things.
But when you came in, you defiled my land
and made my heritage an abomination.
The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?'
Those who handle the law did not know me;
the shepherds transgressed against me;
the prophets prophesied by Baal
and went after things that do not profit.

"Therefore I still contend with you,
declares the Lord,
and with your children's children I will contend.
For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see,
or send to Kedar and examine with care;

see if there has been such a thing.
Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?
But my people have changed their glory
for that which does not profit.
Be appalled, O heavens, at this;
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
declares the Lord,
for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water.

“Is Israel a slave? Is he a homeborn servant?
Why then has he become a prey?
The lions have roared against him;
they have roared loudly.
They have made his land a waste;
his cities are in ruins, without inhabitant.
Moreover, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes
have shaved the crown of your head.
Have you not brought this upon yourself
by forsaking the Lord your God,
when he led you in the way?
And now what do you gain by going to Egypt
to drink the waters of the Nile?
Or what do you gain by going to Assyria
to drink the waters of the Euphrates?
Your evil will chastise you,
and your apostasy will reprove you.
Know and see that it is evil and bitter
for you to forsake the Lord your God;
the fear of me is not in you,
declares the Lord God of hosts.

“For long ago I broke your yoke
and burst your bonds;
but you said, ‘I will not serve.’
Yes, on every high hill
and under every green tree
you bowed down like a whore.
Yet I planted you a choice vine,
wholly of pure seed.
How then have you turned degenerate
and become a wild vine?
Though you wash yourself with lye
and use much soap,
the stain of your guilt is still before me,
declares the Lord God.

How can you say, 'I am not unclean,
I have not gone after the Baals'?
Look at your way in the valley;
know what you have done—
a restless young camel running here and there,
a wild donkey used to the wilderness,
in her heat sniffing the wind!
Who can restrain her lust?
None who seek her need weary themselves;
in her month they will find her.
Keep your feet from going unshod
and your throat from thirst.
But you said, 'It is hopeless,
for I have loved foreigners,
and after them I will go.'

"As a thief is shamed when caught,
so the house of Israel shall be shamed:
they, their kings, their officials,
their priests, and their prophets,
who say to a tree, 'You are my father,'
and to a stone, 'You gave me birth.'
For they have turned their back to me,
and not their face.
But in the time of their trouble they say,
'Arise and save us!'
But where are your gods
that you made for yourself?
Let them arise, if they can save you,
in your time of trouble;
for as many as your cities
are your gods, O Judah.

"Why do you contend with me?
You have all transgressed against me,
declares the Lord.
In vain have I struck your children;
they took no correction;
your own sword devoured your prophets
like a ravening lion.
And you, O generation, behold the word of the Lord.
Have I been a wilderness to Israel,
or a land of thick darkness?
Why then do my people say, 'We are free,
we will come no more to you?'
Can a virgin forget her ornaments,
or a bride her attire?
Yet my people have forgotten me
days without number.

“How well you direct your course
to seek love!
So that even to wicked women
you have taught your ways.
Also on your skirts is found
the lifeblood of the guiltless poor;
you did not find them breaking in.
Yet in spite of all these things
you say, ‘I am innocent;
surely his anger has turned from me.’
Behold, I will bring you to judgment
for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’
How much you go about,
changing your way!
You shall be put to shame by Egypt
as you were put to shame by Assyria.
From it too you will come away
with your hands on your head,
for the Lord has rejected those in whom you trust,
and you will not prosper by them.

Jeremiah, when he received these words, was a young man. What he is preaching of is the betrayal of love. This is the picture of God as husband, the nation of Israel and the kingdom of Judah his wife.

The question is, how are we to understand this betrayal of love? One way could be by way of politics, or it could be theology. You see, for many during the time of Judah, they were viewing everything through the lens of politics. The people of God were trying to figure out what ought we to do? And they did so by looking at the heads of nations, aligning themselves with particular politics so as to preserve themselves. This is important to note, because of this. Just before Jeremiah’s coming to his ministry, something happened, and that something was the mighty country and kingdom of Assyria. If you can imagine in your minds—if you can go back to geography class—a serious stretch from north Iran all the way down to Egypt. It was a vast kingdom, and at the head of it was a man named Ashurbanipal. He was ruthless yet efficient in his leadership. All the while in the nation of Judah, something had happened. Failing to follow the ways and learn from the Lord, they also did not learn the example of Israel. And so what would happen is a successive number of kings of Judah, some who would follow the Lord, some who would disobey.

You can simply go to II Kings chapter 20 and read through. You’ll read about Ahaz, who deliberately went against the word of the Lord and set up foreign gods in foreign temples throughout Judah. Then came a reformer, Hezekiah. Hezekiah followed the way of the Lord, but Hezekiah would die in battle, and his son Manasseh would take over. But Manasseh was not as effective a leader. He was quickly assassinated, and then those assassins were assassinated. And they came to Josiah, who was eight years old. Eight years old. And along with the priests, they helped raise Josiah in 640. And for thirteen years he reigned with the help of others, but he was the king of Judah. This is how far away they had fallen from the Lord. They could not even find the law of God. IT was completely gone. It was no longer being read by the priests. And so much degradation had fallen on the nation of Judah because of their failing to following the Lord.

And then in 627, something happens. Josiah, along with his priest, find a portion of Deuteronomy that contains the law. And that was the same year of 627 that Jeremiah would receive this calling from the Lord. And Josiah would lead a whole strain of reforms, first through his own repentance, and then with

the priesthood would go about nationwide making vast changes to come into conformity with the ways of the Lord. And this is into which Jeremiah would begin to preach.

But the problem was that Assyria, at the death of Ashurbanipal, could not hold things together, and it erupted in civil war. Nebuchadnezzar, then a warrior, would come and lead the path of destroying the Assyrians all the way to Egypt. And they would take over Judah. Nebuchadnezzar's father passes away. He becomes the king of Babylon. And then in 609, Josiah dies, and every single one of his reforms were overturned. And the people of God and all the leaders quickly turned back to the political winds. Who will we worship? Well, it depends on who we're trying to please. And so they began to turn away from the ways of the Lord and set up foreign gods and foreign temples in the heart of Jerusalem.

One way is to simply look that Israel and Judah were simply caught between a geopolitical warfare of vacillating kingdoms coming and going. Sound familiar? In the same part of the world that many are worried about today. The shifting sands of politics are constant. And Jeremiah, however, would not have it. He would not look at things through a political framework. He would only look at it through a theological framework, and it was this—and I'll form it in a question.

If God was sovereign in calling Jeremiah, if God was sovereign in ruling over his people, if God was sovereign in allowing all of these things to happen—in fact, putting the very word in Jeremiah's mouth that judgment is coming from the north—and guess who that north was? It was going to be Babylon. That means that God would use Babylon to bring judgment on the disobedience of his people. That means that actually what we see with human eyes as geopolitical works of this nation warring against this nation and this king looking for power, this religion trying to ascend to great power and forcing others into subjugation—all of that was happening during this time, much like it is today.

And I want to say to you, if you are a professing Christian: we need to be careful to hear the words of Jeremiah. While they may not have direct parallel with everything we are experiencing, something very much does. He refused to look at the world simply through the human perspective of power politics. He looked at it, because it is God who is behind all things, who holds all things in his hands—and that God would bring judgment on his people, because they refused to return to him in repentance.

But note this. There is not one singular special nation of favoritism in the eyes of the Lord. What matters to him are those who are circumcised in their hearts—meaning, those who return to him in repentance. Today, there is not one nation that can claim Jesus as its king. There is no such thing as a Christian nation. There never has been, never will be. Why? Because Jesus was not the king of a nation. He was the king of a kingdom that was made up of a people across nations, across people groups, to make for himself a body of people, his bride, the church. And the church is spread out through kingdoms small and large among nations whose religions want to force Christianity into subjugation and persecution.

But is God not in charge of all the political powers? Is he not the one who sets up kings in their thrones? Is God not in control? And isn't it when we are afraid, we want to look to the political leaders for our safety? Perhaps to return to some bygone era of hope, of protection, and safety? The lessons of history teach us there is no such place. This was six hundred years before Christ, and the shifting sands of politics continue on. But the Lord and his kingship and his dominion is forever. And his calling to his people through the prophet of Jeremiah is, "Do not look to foreign gods or foreign nations or to politics for salvation. Look to the Lord, for he is the Lord, the one who is with us, the one who watches over us."

But then there are two sins. The sins were: they forsook the springs of living water and dug out cisterns of their own. The cisterns were dug into clay ground and into stone to hold water. The problem is, if the stone and if the clay at all was of bad condition, it would leak, and into it would be all kinds of sewage and bad rain, there would build up bacteria and worms and all sorts of things, and would make the people sick. These were to be two signs of their rejection of the Lord's kingship, of the Lord's headship, and how they were returning to find foreign things, foreign sources, for what they thought was

living water—which is why he says, “You’re going to go to Egypt to drink there? Or Assyria to drink of there? It will poison you,” he says.

And it’s very clear that this betrayal of love pictured in these two signs of turning away from the Lord is that they really wanted a convenient god. He says, when they run into trouble, they say, “Come and save us!” You see? That’s the temptation—to simply see God as the one we call in as the all-powerful one when we’re in trouble. They wanted the convenient god. This is similar to our own day when, indeed, we hear these words:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. [2 Timothy 3:1-5, NIV 1984]

“Having a form of godliness but denying its power.” Jeremiah knew that even all the reforms under Josiah was simply an outward obedience, but hearts that were quick to run when things got uncomfortable. They wanted a convenient god. Such is the case in our day.

And this is not something that’s “out there.” It’s also something which the people of God can also fall prey to. For Paul would write in Titus:

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. [Titus 3:3-7, NIV 1984]

We are called not to call on a convenient god, but the one who comes to us even in our disobedience, and walks among us, and calls us to himself, and washes us clean with the water that can truly satisfy.

And now the conclusion of this. Robbie will read verses one through five of chapter three.

[Robbie Pennington:]

If a man divorces his wife
and she leaves him and marries another man,
should he return to her again?
Would not the land be completely defiled?
But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers—
would you now return to me?”
declares the Lord.

“Look up to the barren heights and see.
Is there any place where you have not been ravished?
By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers,
sat like a nomad in the desert.
You have defiled the land
with your prostitution and wickedness.
Therefore the showers have been withheld,
and no spring rains have fallen.
Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute;

you refuse to blush with shame.
Have you not just called to me:
‘My Father, my friend from my youth,
will you always be angry?
Will your wrath continue forever?’
This is how you talk,
but you do all the evil you can.”

[Randy Lovelace:] So the key question for Jeremiah here in these verses would be the key question for the land of Judah: will you always be angry, O Lord? You see, Jeremiah and his life and his ministry would take place during the most tumultuous time in the history of Israel. He would be taken into exile, and he would have to prophesy even while he was seeing the prophecies that he had already prophesied come true. And yet the people of God would not turn. And yet they would still say, “Lord, will you not come to us? Will you not help us? Will you always be angry?” This is why Jeremiah suffered. He suffered for the sake of his people, that they would turn to the Lord. He suffered because he had to utter difficult words, because the people of God were turning from the Lord and turning to that which they could see and negotiate themselves.

The sad reality is, Jeremiah’s life would never depart from this suffering. And as I said at the opening, the end of the book is his going out into the mist, as it were, under armed guard, into a foreign nation. This would be six hundred years prior to what we celebrate this month, the advent of Christ. There is a reason why we need to hear the words of the prophets. There’s a reason why we need to go back and rehearse—because the coming of Christ came into a particular time, a particular brokenness. People were longing and asking, “Will God always be angry? Will he not return us to a favored status? Will he not rescue us? Will he not make us a mighty nation again?”

See, one of the things that we need to remember is that Jesus came not only as Savior—he came as prophet. In fact, he would be a greater Jeremiah. Jesus comes as prophet, priest, and king. He came first as a prophet, and he says, “Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Turn to me. Repent. For no one comes unto the Father except through me.” And he prays for his people. And he says, “I’ve not come to make you a nation. I’ve come to make you a precious people, sons and daughters.” People tried to trip him up, hoping that he could be the one to restore Israel to hope, or he could be the one that they could leverage power from, but Jesus would not have it. He would continue to prophesy: “For you have fallen away from the Lord. For you have not turned to him.” Over and over again, he would prophesy.

But here’s the key difference. Both Jeremiah was a suffering and weeping prophet—Jesus was the suffering servant. Jeremiah would go off into the mist. Jesus would go off to the cross. You see, Jeremiah could only utter the words of the Lord. He could not bring rescue and salvation to the people of God. He could not change their hearts. He could not demonstrate the grace of God. But Jesus would be both the Word of God made flesh and God with us. And he would come, and he would walk in our midst, and he would go as a suffering servant to the cross. And there on that cross he would suffer at the hands of those who had just proclaimed him lord and king. Jesus is the prophet who could save his people from their sins. “For you shall give him the name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.”

You see, on the cross of Christ, Jesus became all our sin. He became the offering for all of our malice and hatred and disobedience. And he would look upon a people saying “crucify him,” and he would say what Jeremiah could never say, but only Jesus is the prophet who would give himself: “Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.” And in that, Jesus would become the preacher to the exiles. But instead of calling them home to Jerusalem or calling them home to a nation state or calling them home to presidents and congresses and parliaments and treaties, he would call them home to himself, the Lord, our God, who came to take away the sins of the world. Why do we rehearse such a long passage of Jeremiah? Because we forget, and we so easily turn to that which we think will save us. But only Christ,

who is our hope, who is our grace, who is the love of God, who is the preacher who says, "Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Pray with me.

Father, I thank you for the patience of your people. Lord, we ask that your Word would call us to your righteousness, to your salvation, to your rescue. And Father, we pray that you would, in this season of advent, enable us to long for the Lord who has come to rescue us from our sins, who is to us the joy of our salvation. Not our righteousness, but yours. Not the hope built by our hands, but the hope that came through a child given the name Jesus. Now, Lord, enable us by your Holy Spirit to renew again and to remember that we forget, that we walk in our own ways, but you have come to us. Now, by your grace, renew us and give us grace to look to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.