

Prophet
Jeremiah 1:1-10

The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah,
of the priests who were in Anathoth
in the land of Benjamin,

²to whom the word of the LORD came
in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah,
in the thirteenth year of his reign.

³It came also in the days
of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah,
and until the end of the eleventh year
of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah,
until the captivity of Jerusalem
in the fifth month.

⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to me
saying,

⁵ '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.'

⁶Then I said,

'Ah, Lord GOD!
Truly I do not know how to speak,
for I am only a boy.'

⁷But the LORD said to me,
'Do not say,
"I am only a boy";

for you shall go
to all to whom I send you,

and you shall speak
whatever I command you.

⁸ Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you
to deliver you,

says the LORD.'

⁹Then the LORD put out his hand
and touched my mouth;

and the LORD said to me,
'Now I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰ See,
today I appoint you

over nations
and over kingdoms,

to pluck up
and to pull down,

to destroy
and to overthrow,

to build
and to plant.'

Gospel
Luke 13:10-17

¹⁰ Now he was teaching
in one of the synagogues
on the sabbath.

¹¹ And just then
there appeared a woman
with a spirit that had crippled her
for eighteen years.

She was bent over
and was quite unable
to stand up straight.

¹² When Jesus saw her,
he called her over
and said,

*'Woman,
you are set free
from your ailment.'*

¹³ When he laid his hands on her,
immediately
she stood up straight
and began praising God.

¹⁴ But the leader
of the synagogue,
indignant
because Jesus had cured
on the sabbath,
kept saying to the crowd,

'There are six days
on which work
ought to be done;

come on those days
and be cured,
and not on the sabbath day.'

¹⁵ But the Lord answered him
and said,

'You hypocrites!
Does not each of you
on the sabbath
untie his ox or his donkey
from the manger,
and lead it away
to give it water?

¹⁶ And ought not this woman,
a daughter of Abraham
whom Satan bound
for eighteen long years,
be set free from this bondage
on the sabbath day?'

¹⁷ When he said this,
all his opponents were put to shame;

and the entire crowd was rejoicing
at all the wonderful things
that he was doing.

Reading the Prophet This Week

This is the first of six weeks of bits from Jeremiah
A voice from the last decades of the 7th C BCE in Judah
Leading up to the Babylonian exile
More than a century past Israel's fall to Assyria

The original guy leaves autobiographical bits,
a priest from Anathoth near Jerusalem
Loud for over 40 years, from the 620's of Josiah's reforms
to the 586 deportation of puppets Zedekiah and Jehoiakim

The book we get is a post-exile edition, reshaped in hindsight
Crediting Baruch as his amanuensis writing down his words
Organized by 'he told us so,' despite Josiah's reforms
Preserved in Babylon, though Jeremiah died in Egypt instead

Jeremiah's lineage is Elide priests over 2 centuries
His prophetic claim here is of successive visions,
Starting in the 20's and ending in the 80's
As a kid first, and finally as a curmudgeon

The word he's given is unwelcome, to him and from him
Like Isaiah a century before, God 'puts words in his mouth'
*over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'*

Josiah tries great Deuteronomic reforms, cleaning up the cult
reacting to the fate of Israel, hoping on alliance with Egypt
Jerry won't 'get with the program' of official optimism
Through waves of Babylonian invasion and siege

Jerry's angry civil disobedience gets him silenced, jailed,
His books burned, his humiliations repeated,
His depressive responses called 'jeremiads'
His ultimate fate separated from the exiles

Can you imagine his early realization of his place and role?

Reading the Gospel This Week

We continue 'Luke's special section' this week
A story only found in Luke, of healing a bent woman,
(not confused with the bleeding woman)
Causing another sabbath controversy.

Notice Jesus is teaching in the (not 'their') synagogue,
And the opposition is from a synagogue leader –
Not labelled scribe, pharisee, or agent of Jerusalem powers
This is an in-house, family fight, predicted last week

Jesus' rejoinder starts 'you hypocrites' –
But as Thom preached, it's less pejorative than our usage,
Naming an inconsistency, a gap between 'is' and 'ought'
Not imputing a conscious dishonest intention

The bent woman is labeled 'daughter of Abraham',
One of us, not universal Adamic humanity,
In a wider older 'us' than Israel or Moses or David
Entitled by her longsuffering to relief on sabbath

The reaction is shame for Jesus' religious opponents,
And honour for Jesus' disciples and fans
Luke's community a 'big tent' synagogue
Reflecting post-70AD developments

This 'missional' helping and healing focus
Identifying a need and relieving suffering,
Need not polarize against teaching or ritual community
And seems less apocalyptic and political than last week

What's your Jesus for, and how does your Christ work?
What's your church for, and how does the body of Christ work?
Does hypocrisy or conflict invalidate the community witness?
What 'wonderful things' can you celebrate?

Why include or omit this story in any gospel of 'greatest hits'?