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HOPE FOR YOUR FUTURE: READINGS FROM JEREMIAH

LEE MAGNESS

This collection of readings drawn from the book of the prophet Jeremiah features the voice of the Lord (1) and the voice of the prophet (2). The section labeled “God’s Promises” could also be used independently as a litany for leader and congregation.

GOD’S CALL TO JEREMIAH (1.5–10)

- 1 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.
- 2 Ah, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak;
 I am only a child.
- 1 Do not say, “I am only a child.”
 You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.
Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you
 Now, I have put my words in your mouth.
See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down,
 to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.

GOD’S CHARGE TO HIS PEOPLE (2.2–13)

- 1 Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem:
 I remember the devotion of your youth...
- 2 [God] remember[s] the devotion of your youth,
 how as a bride you loved [God] and followed [him] through the desert,
 through a land not sown.
Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest;
 [He] brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce.
But you came and defiled [his] land and made [his] inheritance detestable.
- 1 Therefore I bring charges against you again...
- 2 Therefore [God] bring[s] charges against you again,
 and [God] will bring charges against your children’s children.
- 1 My people have committed two sins:
 They have forsaken me, the spring of living water,
 and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

GOD'S CALL TO REPENTANCE (3.12-14; 4.1; 4.21-26; 6.16; 7.1-6; 15.19)

- 1 Go, proclaim this message toward the north:
 Return, faithless Israel, I will frown on you no longer,
 for I am merciful, I will not be angry forever.
- 2 Only acknowledge your guilt—
 you have rebelled against the Lord your God,
 you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree,
 and have not obeyed the Lord.
- 1 Return, faithless people, for I am your husband.
 If you return to me, O Israel,
 Return to me.
- 2 How long must I see the battle standard
 and hear the sound of the trumpet?
I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty;
 and at the heavens, and their light was gone.
I looked at the mountains and they were quaking;
 all the hills are swaying.
I looked and there were no people;
 every bird in the sky had flown away.
I looked and the fruitful land was a desert;
 all its towns lay in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger.
- 1 Stand at the crossroads and look;
 Ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it.

Stand at the gate of the Lord's house and there proclaim this message:
- 2 Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah
 who come through these gates to worship the Lord.
This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says:
- 1 Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place.
- 2 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the Lord,
 the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!"
- 1 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly,
 if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow
 and do not shed innocent blood in this place,
 and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm,
then I will let you live in this place,
 in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever.

If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me.

JEREMIAH'S STATEMENT OF TRUST (8.13; 10.6-7; 10.23-24; 14.22; 16.19-21; 17.14)

2 O my Comforter in sorrow,
my heart is faint within me.
Listen to the cry of my people from a land far away:
"Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King no longer there?"

No one is like you, O Lord; you are great,
and your name is mighty in power.
Who should not revere you, O King of the nations? This is your due.
Among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms,
there is no one like you.

I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own;
it is not for man to direct his steps.
Correct me, Lord, but only with justice—not in your anger,
lest you reduce me to nothing.

Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain?
Do the skies themselves send down showers?
No, it is you, O Lord our God.
Therefore our hope is in you, for you are the one who does all this.

O Lord, my strength and my fortress,
my refuge in time of distress,
to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth.

1 Therefore I will teach them—
this time I will teach them my power and might.
Then they will know that my name is the Lord.

2 Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed;
save me and I will be saved,
for you are the one I praise.

**GOD'S PROMISES (23.5-6; 20.13; 23.23-24; 31.7; 30.11; 33.11; 30.22; 31.18; 31.3-5;
20.13; 31.8-9; 31.17; 31.7; 31.31-34; 33.11; 31.35)**

1 The days are coming, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch,
a King who will reign wisely
and do what is just and right in the land.
In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.
This is the name by which he will be called:
The Lord Our Righteousness.

- 2 Sing to the Lord!
Give praise to the Lord!
He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked.
- 1 Am I only a God nearby,
and not a God far away?
Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?
Do not I fill heaven and earth?
- 2 Make your praises heard, and say,
“O Lord, save your people.”
- 1 I am with you and will save you.
Though I completely destroy all the nations,
I will not completely destroy you.
I will discipline you but only with justice.
- 2 Give thanks to the Lord Almighty,
for the Lord is good;
his love endures forever.
- 1 So you will be my people,
and I will be your God.
- 2 Restore me, and I will return,
because you are the Lord my God.
- 1 I have loved you with an everlasting love;
I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again
and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel.
Again you will take up your tambourines
and go out to dance with the joyful.
Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria;
the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.
- 2 Sing to the Lord!
Give praise to the Lord!
He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked.
- 1 See, I will bring them from the land of the north
and gather them from the ends of the earth.
Among them will be the blind and the lame,
expectant mothers and women in labor;
a great throng will return.

They will come with weeping;
they will pray as I bring them back.
I will lead them beside streams of water
on a level path where they will not stumble.
So there is hope for your future.

2 Make your praises heard, and say,
“O Lord, save your people.”

1 The time is coming when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.
It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers
when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them.
I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.
No longer will a man teach his neighbor saying, “Know the LORD,”
because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.
For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.

2 Give thanks to the Lord Almighty,
for the Lord is good;
his love endures forever.

1 In those days and at that time
I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line;
he will do what is just and right in the land.
In those days they will be saved and live in safety.
This is the name by which it will be called:
The Lord Our Righteousness.

2 This is what the Lord says,
he who appoints the sun to shine by day,
who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night,
who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
the Lord Almighty is his name.