

The Call of Jeremiah

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Date: 18 September 2020

[0 : 00] I'm going to begin our service by singing to God's praise from Psalm 63.

Psalm 63. Lord ye my God I rarely seek, my soul doth thirst for thee. My flesh longs in a dry parched land, wherein no waters be, that I thy power may behold and brightness of thy face, as I have seen thee heretofore within thy holy place.

Since better is thy love than life, my lips thee praise shall give. I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live.

Even as with marrow and with fat, my soul shall filled be. Then shall my mouth with joyful lips sing praises unto thee. When I do thee upon my bed remember with delight, and when on thee I meditate in watches of the night, in shadow of thy wings I'll joy.

For thou mine help hast been, my soul thee follows hard, and me thy right hand doth sustain. And so on.

[1 : 21] Let us sing these verses to God's praise. Psalm 63 from the beginning, singing to the end of verse 8. Psalm 63 from the beginning, singing to the end of verse 8.

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Psalm 63 from the beginning, singing to the end of verse 8. My soul doth thirst for thee, My soul doth thirst for thee, That I, that I, that I power, could behold, And kindness of thy best, As I unseen thee here, To walk present thy holy bliss.

Since then to Christ, I love the tide, My mercy Beach, CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS In shadow all thy place, the joy for love my death must be.

[4 : 46] My soul in the love's heart and pain, thy life and death must be.

Let us join together in prayer. Let us pray. For the most holy and ever-blessed God, we give thanks that we can praise your name and that we can sing your praises.

And that when we so do, your servant the psalmist is often one that leads us to the place where our spirit is lifted up.

Where our heart and mind are moved so as to worship God in a better frame of mind than we might otherwise have enjoyed.

We give thanks that your word is such that it is a living word. And that we can find expression to our thoughts as they are bound in with the thoughts of this psalmist.

[6 : 10] Even these words that we were singing, that we had upon our lips, Since better is thy love than life, my lips thee praise shall give.

I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live. May that be true of each of us, that we are engaged in your worship whenever the privilege is ours, When we are moved to praise our God.

We give thanks that we are not bound by location or time, merely opportunity.

When it arises, grant to us the spirit of praise and thanksgiving, that it may overwhelm us, So that, be it day or night, be it in any place, whether it is appointed to your worship or not, That we may find ourselves stirred up to lift up our voices in your praise.

Even the secret of the recesses of our being, that we might find words rising up within us,
That praise you, O God.

[7 : 27] We pray that you would bless us today, remembering each of us according to the needs
that we have, Temporal or spiritual, be they the needs of the moment or needs that are
hidden from us.

We give thanks that you are able to minister to us, whether it is for the present or even
prepare us for what lies before us.

We are mindful of the uncertainty of our lives. We are mindful of the way in which this
world brings into our experience things that we never thought possible.

Even the current predicament has assailed the world, where COVID-19 is wreaking havoc
within the populations.

There are those of an optimistic frame of mind who think that we can easily champion this
virus, And that we can better it, and yet we are reminded that we are but men, And that
this is something that man has yet to conquer.

[8 : 42] But we can go to you, the God who is victorious in something greater than any virus, and
that is our sin.

That you have found a remedy for it, and provided it to us in the person of your Son, Jesus
Christ. And that whoever is found in him, need not have any doubts concerning what
awaits them.

Whatever this world will bring, that as they are in him, they are assured of a final victory.
So we pray for those that are in need this day.

Remembering especially those who have succumbed to the virus. We pray for those that
are in need this day.

We pray for those that are in need this day. We pray for those that are in need this day.
We pray for those that are in need this day. We pray for those that are in need this day.
We pray that you would encourage them to bow the knee to Christ. To confess sin.

[10 : 03] To seek grace to forsake it. And to know the difference between looking to the arm of
flesh, rather than looking to the Almighty.

We pray that you would bless doctors and nurses, and all who are involved in caring for
others. Remember our communities and those who regulate what goes on within our
communities.

We pray for our government. We pray for the parliaments. We pray for local government.
Those whose task it is to ensure that the well-being of their fellows is looked after.

We pray for our nation, the queen and the household that is royal. We bring their spiritual
welfare to you.

That you would bless them, body and soul. That you would remember those who have
gone out with the Gospel. And those who proclaim the word. Even to those who would not
wish to hear it.

[11 : 06] Remember all the nations of the earth. Remember especially those that have been
devastated by this illness and by other forms of disease.

We know that there are nations that are poverty struck. Those who are in want, who have
no food to speak of. Whose welfare is limited.

And who have a constant battle to survive within the world. Because of not just Covid-19,
but also other things that are prevalent and have been prevalent in every generation.

We pray for those whose task it is to preserve the peace of this world. Remember for the
peacekeepers of the world.

Those who serve in the armed forces. Remember those who have to police society. Lord you are in control of all our lives.

[12 : 08] And we pray that you would miserably incline your ear towards us. That your praying people would be heard. And that they would be convinced that it is God alone who is able to do for us what others are unable to do.

We pray that you would bless the preached word. Whoever has gone out with it this day may they be assured that your word will not return empty. That it will fulfil that which you have purposed for it.

Wherever your word is disseminated by whichever means. Be it verbally in the pulpit. In the gatherings that are great or small. Through the medium of radio and television.

We pray Lord that you would bless the word. Bless it as it read. Bless it as it is heard. Blessed as it is caught. Meditated upon. Reflected upon.

May it yield fruit in our lives. We pray that you would watch over as we turn to your word. Blessed to us we pray. And continue to sanctify every visitation in Providence.

[13 : 15] Even those who are unwell. We pray for their recovery. Those that we know that are in need. That you would uphold and sustain them. Remember the frail elderly. Remember our young people.

Remember the schools. And those who labour within these walls. That you would continue to encourage them. To instruct these young lives. That have been uprooted at times.

And distracted from being able to continue their learning process. Be near to them we pray. We pray for not just intellectual growth.

But spiritual growth. That you would bring the name of Christ. To be heard. And to be celebrated. And to be worshipped. Go before us now we pray. Forgiving every transgression.

Cleansing from sin. In Jesus Redeemer's name. We would ask it all. Amen. Going to hear the word of God. As we have it in the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

[14 : 12] Jeremiah and the first chapter. We may read the whole chapter. Jeremiah chapter 1. The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah.

Of the priests that were in Ananath. In the land of Benjamin. To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah. The son of Ammon king of Judah.

In the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim. The son of Josiah king of Judah. And to the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah.

The son of Josiah king of Judah. And to the carrying away of Jerusalem. Captive in the fifth month. Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying. Before I formed thee in the belly.

I knew thee. And before thou camest forth out of the womb. I sanctified thee. And I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I.

[15 : 13] O Lord God. Behold I cannot speak. For I am a child. But the Lord said unto me. Say not I am a child. For thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee.

And whatsoever I command thee. That thou shalt speak. Be ye not afraid of their faces. For I am with thee to deliver thee. Saith the Lord.

Then the Lord put forth his hand. And touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me. Behold I have put my words in thy mouth. See I have this day. Set thee over the nations.

And over the kingdoms. To root out and to pull down. And to destroy and to throw down. To build and to plant. Moreover. The word of the Lord came unto me.

Saying Jeremiah. What seest thou? And I said. I see a rod of an amon tree. Then said the Lord unto me. Thou hast well seen. For I will hasten my word to perform it.

[16 : 15] And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time. Saying what seest thou? And I said. I see a seething part. And the face thereof is toward the north.

Then the Lord said unto me out of the north. And evil shall break forth. Upon all the inhabitants of the land. For lo I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north.

Saith the Lord. And they shall come. And they shall set everyone. His throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem. And against all the walls thereof round about.

And against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them. Touching all their wickedness. Who have forsaken me. And have burnt incense unto other gods.

And worshiped the works of their own hands. Thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise. And speak unto them all that I command thee. Be not dismayed.

[17 : 14] At their faces. Lest I confound thee before them. For behold. I have made thee this day a defense city. And an iron pillar. And brazen walls.

Against the whole land. Against the kings of Judah. Against the princes thereof. Against the priests thereof. And against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee.

But they shall not prevail against thee. For I am with thee. Saith the Lord. To deliver thee. And so on. May the Lord at his blessing. To this reading of his word.

And to his name. Be the praise. We can turn to the passage that we have read there. And we can consider the words that we have from verse 4.

Down to verse 10. Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying. Before I formed thee in the belly. I knew thee. Before thou camest forth out of the womb.

[18 : 14] I sanctified thee. And I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. And so on. The passage before us describes.

The call of God to Jeremiah the prophet. It is a call that comes in a historical context. That might well dissuade the recipient from having anything to do with it.

Israel had apostatized from the Lord. And experienced his justice pleasure. Several decades later.

Judah was hastening to a similar end. And here God is calling someone to serve him. In such a generation. I think it is important for us to begin.

By considering first of all the God who calls. And secondly. Analyze in a limited way the response. That is given to that call.

[19 : 17] The first thing that we can notice is that God is speaking to Jeremiah. The word of the Lord came to me.

The scripture often draws attention to the fact that as far as a prophetic ministry was concerned. The word of the Lord came to them.

Isaiah the prophet in those great words of chapter 40. Where he is sent out to encourage God's people. Comfort ye. Comfort ye.

He says. My people. Says your God. He goes on to say. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. And all flesh shall see it together.

For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. The teacher and preacher John Stott writes. The scripture. The appearance that God has spoken.

[20 : 17] Both through historical deeds. And through explanatory words. And the two belong indissolubly together.

It cannot be separated. We are not given an explanation of how Jeremiah knew that it was the Lord that was speaking to him.

But it seems obvious that he could only understand it to be so. No one else could say these words but God. And in his commissioning he was told to take that word.

And only that word to others. Behold. Behold. He says. I have put my words in your mouth. Let me quote the words of the late Professor John L. Mackay.

The message and activity about to be described did not originate with Jeremiah. But was the result of specific divine communication and divine confrontation.

[21 : 25] Jeremiah did not set himself up as a prophet. As if it were a career option that he might or might not follow.

It was a matter of divine selection. That was suddenly intrusively made known to him. The one speaking could only be God.

Because he claims a knowledge that is exclusively the domain of deity. Not only is he saying before you were formed. It is more specific than that.

Before I formed you he says. In the belly. He is a God who is sovereign. He did. The God who created.

He formed. He sanctified. Perhaps consecrated. In the sense of putting his hand upon him. For the particular work. To which he was calling him.

[22 : 24] I knew thee. He says. Professor John Murray calls the knowledge of peculiar distinguishing affection. Love and interest. I knew you.

How can you know someone that does not exist? The answer that you would give and that I must give is. I cannot. But God has an infinite capacity to know all things.

Even before they possess an existence. It is beyond our ability to conceive of such an intimate knowledge. But we can believe it. To be so as an experience that is taught.

As through the scripture. By faith we look to the God who foretold for example the birth of his son. By the mouth of his servants the prophets.

A foretelling that was preceded by an act of divine love. In the realms of eternity before the world was even created. Whereby in the councils of peace assurity was provided.

[23 : 27] For a fallen race that had yet to draw breath. I sanctify thee he says. I ordain thee. A prophet to the nation.

Many of the divines see a similarity there between the words of the prophet. Or the words of the Lord to the prophet. And the words that the apostle Paul uses.

When he describes the care and affection. And attention that God shows. To his own people. And we know that all things work together for good.

To them that love God. To them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate. To be conformed to the image of his son.

That he might be the firstborn. Among many brethren. Comforting words to those who encounter. The perplexities thrown up by this confused world.

[24 : 27] In the midst of it all. God is sovereign. And as sovereign he sends out his ambassadors. To speak on his behalf to the nations. Some wonder at this seemingly broad sphere of service.

The word of God. More than just Judah. Perhaps it means. Just the role that he is governed. Governed by where God appoints him to be. Israel and Judah of old thought they had exclusive rights.

To the salvation promised by Jehovah. But the gospel evangel. Is to all ends of the earth. So how does Jeremiah respond to that word from God.

He responds in the first instance with excuses. Ah Lord God. He says. Behold I cannot speak. For I am a child.

In a sense there is inconsistency. In that declaration. Is there not? There is the certainty. That it is God that is speaking to him.

[25 : 29] And yet. The clear reluctance. To do what God is asking. We cannot I suppose be too hard. On Jeremiah.

In fact it would be wrong of us. To be overly critical. Many have rushed into a task. Of far less import. At a human level.

And found themselves unequal to it. When you think of the do it yourself industry. That supplies all kinds of fixtures and fittings. To would be joiners and plumbers.

And that. The very same. Keeps. Many skilled craftsmen gainfully employed. Fixing or redoing the bodge chops of the enthusiast.

Who lack the skill to complete the task. It may be that Jeremiah could not have foreseen. The awesome nature of the task. The awesome nature of the task. He was presented with.

[26 : 27] But he would not have been entirely ignorant. Of the woeful spiritual condition of Judah. Having been raised. As the son of a priest. In Anathoth.

Many of the theologians remind us. Of the reluctance shown. At least initially by many of the Bible saints. That God puts his hand on. Just look at Moses.

When Moses was. Called by God to. Go to. To Pharaoh. Says who am I. That I should go to Pharaoh.

And that I should bring forth the children of Israel. And of Egypt. You can think of many others. Gideon. Who was reluctant to serve God. In that way. Jonah.

Who took flight rather than go to Nineveh. As God commanded. John Murray. Theologian wisely writes. The greatness of the responsibility.

[27 : 24] The magnitude of the task. The dignity of the office. The deep sense of our own insufficiency. And above all. The majesty and glory.

Of the God whose appointment this is. All combine. To produce an overwhelming sense of unworthiness. And inadequacy. What we see here is indicative.

Not of disobedience. But humility. Says Murray. Many have struggled with God's call. And their own felt lack of unworthiness. For what they considered the highest of callings.

However the Lord in the way he deals with Jeremiah. Reminds him. And us. That it is God who is calling. And as such it is to do his bidding.

Whatsoever I command. That shall you speak. To some that may seem. As if it is. Placing limitations. On the prophet.

[28 : 24] In his role as God's ambassador. In fact what it does. Is embolden. And liberate. So as to proclaim what they know God wants them. What they know God wants them.

That certainly. Liberates. Because as they adhere to this. They know they cannot do wrong. To all that I send thee.

And whatsoever I command. That shall you speak. To be said. And complete. That shall you speak. And complete. Really.

The emphasis is not. On the limitation. Of Jeremiah's commission. As if he were not to go. To those. Command. As if we were not to go. To those commanded to. Though that was undoubtedly true.

Rather it is on the completeness. Of the obedience that is expected. Every one. And every thing. Without exception. because that is his divine commission. He has no option or discretion in the matter.

[29 : 23] The choice of recipients was not his, nor was the message to be delivered to them. It is certain that Jeremiah may have been sensitive because of his age, but God corrects that thinking by reminding him of who sent him. I am with you, he says.

Perhaps the hostility of the people may hinder. Very often it acts as a disincentive to proclaim the truth. But at that point there is a need to recalibrate. Something I read recently opened my mind to the breadth of the Lord's sufferings.

We know of their intensity. We may well go to Gethsemane and the cross and there know that the sufferings of Christ were indeed great.

But the Lord also suffered abuse from the mouth of the unbelievers, the mockery and the laughter and the scorn he endured even while in the path of faithful duty to the will of his Father.

It is replicated what many believers should testify to their faith in Christ and Jew in the public domain and in an increasingly atheistic and hostile society.

[30 : 47] God's word to Jeremiah is, Do not be afraid of their faces. I will deliver. If the call is not from God, if it is not of your own making, when these trials come it will not be easy to stand firm.

But if the call is from God, that is your confidence. This is most surely the case that when a person enters into a Christian ministry, for example, they must do so with the assurance that they are engaged in God's will and when they are, that bolsters their confidence even when they are faced with negative reaction to what they have to proclaim.

Charles Bridge in his book that focuses on aspects of the Christian ministry writes about ministerial failure and he suggests one reason for such was that they lacked such confidence in a divine call.

Quoting the words of Jeremiah 23 which deals with false prophets, I have not sent these prophets yet they ran. They have not spoken to them but they prophesied.

It was not their doctrine that was unsound but that they preached unsent. Our authority, he says, is derived conjointly from God and from the church.

[32 : 21] That is, originally from God confirmed through the medium of the church. The external call is a commission received from and recognised by the church.

Looking after life and the ministry of Jeremiah, this call from God would indeed be tested. And as we see from the account before us, God's personal dealings with him, consecrating his mouth and saying to him, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

If that were not so, the words of verse 10 would fill him with fear more than ever. If you read these words, it certainly doesn't inspire confidence at a human level.

See, I have sent thee this day over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out and to pull down and to destroy, to throw down, to build and to plant.

Nations, kingdoms, a mere mortal sent to do that very thing. But the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles were endowed with a sense of God's call and a measure of his spirit.

[33 : 37] But so too are those he calls to go out to this generation. If indeed we have the clarity and vision that enables us to believe that we are to go to all and speak as he commanded and to speak what he commanded.

There we have the crux of the matter. Jeremiah may have been considered a reluctant prophet at the outset but he was faithful to his calling.

It brought him into conflict on many occasions but what sustained him through these trials was the certainty that he was about God's business.

Just as the Lord after him that Lord that he proclaimed would come as the Messiah that he would he must needs be about his father's business.

His face was set as flint doing what God commanded him to do for the salvation of a fallen world. We are thankful to God that such a calling exists and that he is the one who calls and that he is the one who fills the mouth and he is the one who equips those he calls that they are never ever sent out by their own to minister using their own wiles and their own whims.

[35 : 12] We pray that God would encourage each preacher of the gospel today even in the situation that has befallen us to continue constant earnestly proclaiming the will of God as he has declared it through his word.

May he bless to us these few thoughts. Let us pray. Eternal God we give thanks that your word is our confidence it is our hope hope for seeing us who are ahead in the way.