

Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

Jeremiah “The Weeping Prophet”

Introduction - Jeremiah is often called “**the weeping prophet**” because his ministry is marked by grief, lament, and emotional solidarity with a people collapsing under the weight of their own unfaithfulness. He does not stand above Judah’s destruction with cold detachment; he feels it in his body. Jeremiah announces judgment, but he also mourns the judgment he announces. He weeps because the temple will fall, the nation will unravel, the people will suffer, and the truth he speaks will be rejected by the very community he is trying to save. His tears are not weakness; they are **the emotional cost of prophetic truth-telling**. Jeremiah shows us that real prophecy is not just being right about collapse — it is carrying the heartbreak of it.

Like Jeremiah, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because prophetic clarity does not eliminate grief; the one who sees collapse most clearly often feels its heartbreak most deeply.

I. Overview - The book of Jeremiah centers on a community forced to **rethink everything**.

- A. Imagine being told your **entire identity** (e.g., nation, religious symbols, political system, the sense of God being on your side) is about to be wiped out (not reformed or corrected) – burned to the ground. And, God is the one doing it. That’s Jeremiah.
- B. Jeremiah is not the prophet of personal inspiration. He’s the prophet of **worldview collapse**. The Babylonians have destroyed the temple, ended the line of Davidic kings and taken the population of Jerusalem into captivity.
- C. National confidence is very low. Yet, some voices are declaring, “**peace, peace**” (6:14; 8:11; 14:13-16; 23:16-17; 28:9). Jeremiah condemns this false sense of peace. For this truth-telling Jeremiah is mocked, beaten, imprisoned, accused of treason, and branded unpatriotic.
- D. At one point he tries to quit, blames God...this is a man unraveling in real-time as his world collapses. Then, his prophecies become reality.
- E. In 586 BCE the world Jerusalem knew was destroyed – and with it, their confidence in God. Jeremiah is the book that tries to make sense of this and interprets this collapse as an act of God. The collapse does not signal God’s weakness, but is a **consequence for unfaithfulness**.
- F. This is tricky! Why? It reveals **temple worship, being the “elect,” and using religious language does not guarantee Divine endorsement**.
- G. The historical Jeremiah spoke into this crisis. The book of Jeremiah is what his message became as scribes and communities wrestled with what his message meant.

II. What is a prophet?

- A. Jeremiah isn't primarily a predictor of the future. He's a truth-teller about the present.
 - 1. Jeremiah doesn't spend most of his energy saying: "Here's what will happen in 200 years." He's saying: "**Look at what we are becoming. Look at what we are doing. Look at what we have forgotten. If we continue, this is where it leads.**"

Jeremiah 36:4-7, 24-26

⁴Then Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at Jeremiah’s dictation all the words that the Lord had spoken to him.⁵ And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, “**I am prevented from**

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entering the house of the Lord, ⁶ so you go, and on a fast day in the hearing of the people in the Lord's house you shall read the words of the Lord from the scroll that you have written at my dictation. You shall read them also in the hearing of all the people of Judah who come up from their towns. ⁷ It may be that their plea will come before the Lord and that all of them will turn from their evil ways, for great is the anger and wrath that the Lord has pronounced against this people."

²⁴ Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was alarmed, nor did they tear their garments. ²⁵ Even when Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king **not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them.** ²⁶ And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son and Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to **arrest the secretary Baruch and the prophet Jeremiah.** But the Lord hid them.

B. American Prophets in the legacy of Jeremiah:

1. **Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896)** — *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, make suffering visible.
2. **Frederick Douglass (1818–1895)** — Voiced national moral indictment.
3. **Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)** — National sin → divine judgment → mercy.
4. **Howard Thurman (1899–1981)** — the human soul under dehumanization.
5. **Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972)** — God's concern → human suffering → prophetic identification → moral confrontation.
6. **Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968)** — prophetic confrontation, lament, hope.
7. **Dorothy Day (1897–1980)** — Prophetic critique embodied in alternative community.
8. **James Baldwin (1924–1987)** — Cultural truth-telling and exposure of self-deception.

III. Performance or Faithfulness?

A. Jeremiah 7:21–23 — Obedience over sacrifice

"Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them: Obey my voice..."

1. Jeremiah is not saying ritual is meaningless; he is saying ritual without obedience becomes meaningless. **Blood on the altar cannot cover blood on the hands.**

B. Jeremiah 7:4–11 — The temple sermon

"Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'"

1. The people are treating the temple like a **spiritual insurance policy**. Jeremiah says: you cannot exploit your neighbor all week, then hide inside sacred architecture and call that faithfulness.

C. Jeremiah 6:20 — Sacrifice rejected without righteousness

"What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba...? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor are your sacrifices pleasing to me."

1. The problem is not that they lack religious activity. **The problem is that their religion has become detached from moral transformation.**

D. Jeremiah 7:9–10 — "We are safe" theology

"Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely... and then come and stand before me in this house... and say, 'We are safe!'— only to go on doing all these abominations?"

1. This is the essence of Jeremiah's critique: "just because blood has been offered, you think

E. Jeremiah 22:3 — Royal religion judged by justice

2. For Jeremiah, the measuring stick of faithfulness is **not how much blood is offered, but whether the vulnerable are protected.**

IV. What do we do when our worldview collapses?

4. This was a painful process for us. Yet, after the pain of these indoctrinations collapsing – we found a new hope – a new way of seeing the world and those around us. And ultimately, we found a new way of imagining God.

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