

SCRIPTURE READING FOR NOVEMBER 28, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14;
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

¹ The prophet Jeremiah sent a letter from Jerusalem to the few surviving elders among the exiles, to the priests and the prophets, and to all the people Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon from Jerusalem.

⁴ The Lord of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims to all the exiles I have carried off from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and settle down; cultivate gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Get married and have children; then help your sons find wives and your daughters find husbands in order that they too may have children. Increase in number there so that you don't dwindle away. ⁷ Promote the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because your future depends on its welfare.

⁸ The Lord of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Don't let the prophets and diviners in your midst mislead you. Don't pay attention to your dreams. ⁹ They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I didn't send them, declares the Lord.

¹⁰ The Lord proclaims: When Babylon's seventy years are up, I will come and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope. ¹² When you call me and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. ¹³ When you search for me, yes, search for me with all your heart, you will find me. ¹⁴ I will be present for you, declares the Lord, and I will end your captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have scattered you, and I will bring you home after your long exile, declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 33:14-16
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

¹⁴ *The time is coming*, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill my gracious promise with the people of Israel and Judah.

¹⁵ *In those days and at that time*, I will raise up a righteous branch from David's line, who will do what is just and right

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Last week we heard from the first prophet Isaiah, who spoke to the northern kingdom of Israel in the time leading up to their destruction by the Assyrian empire. Over the next hundred years, the southern kingdom of Judah alternated between anxiety that something similar would happen to them, and hope for a restored united kingdom.

Ultimately the northern kingdom was consigned to history as the "ten lost tribes" of Israel. The rise of the Babylonian empire brought new threats to Judah, and God called the prophet Jeremiah, when he was still a young person, to speak out about how the unfaithfulness of the leaders and people meant they were vulnerable. Jeremiah was unpopular as he criticized the moral, religious, and political compromises that were being made, and he was often imprisoned or threatened. About 30 years into his turbulent career as a prophet, in the year 597 BCE, the Babylonian empire won the first round and took many of the ruling class, merchants, and artisans into exile. One of the royal court prophets claimed it would last only two years, but Jeremiah knew he was just saying what people wanted to hear, not what was true. *Settle in. Plant roots. Make a life for yourself here in the city where you are. God has not forsaken you. God has called you to be present where you are here, now.*

Today we read the letter Jeremiah sent from his home in a changed Jerusalem to those who had been taken to Babylon in this first round of exile, which can be found in chapter 29. *Adapted from text written by @Teri Peterson on Facebook #Narrative Lectionary*

Remember that the Hebrew prophets were also poets, they wrote in verse with metaphors, rhymes and word-pictures to try to articulate a vision that was beyond what mere words could hold.

As you read and hear two of these poetry-prophecy-visions in chapter 29 and 33 pay attention to what you notice in them and what they make you wonder about...

in the land. ¹⁶ *In those days*, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is what he will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.

Luke 21:25-36
COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. On the earth, there will be dismay among nations in their confusion over the roaring of the sea and surging waves. ²⁶ The planets and other heavenly bodies will be shaken, causing people to faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world. ²⁷ Then they will see **the Human One** coming on a cloud with power and great splendor.

²⁸ Now when these things begin to happen, stand up straight and raise your heads, because your redemption is near.”

²⁹ *Jesus told them a parable*: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹ In the same way, when you see these things happening, you know that God’s kingdom is near. ³² I assure you that this generation won’t pass away until everything has happened. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away.

³⁴ “Take care that your hearts aren’t dulled by drinking parties, drunkenness, and the anxieties of day-to-day life. Don’t let that day fall upon you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. It will come upon everyone who lives on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ **Stay alert** at all times, praying that you are strong enough to escape everything that is about to happen and to stand before **the Human One.**”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Jeremiah lived and wrote during a time of great division. The world seemed to be falling apart. There were lots of answers to what the people should do. But many of them were intended to make the people feel better. Jeremiah chooses to speak truth instead of false comfort. How does this context resonate with what we’re living today?
- How have you possibly fallen asleep, thinking the God will never show up, act, or respond to your hopes and prayers?
- What invitation do you heard the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The time is coming... In those days...

There is a change in time and tense from clear, historic description to more poetic future oriented vision-casting. These expressions are the ancient ones for what we usually refer to as the end of days, the apocalypse, Armageddon or the end of the world – God’s promised future.

The gospel of Luke is one of the four principal retellings of the life and teachings of Jesus. Written with a vast vocabulary and explanations of Jewish traditions it was most likely written for non-Jewish Greek-speaking followers of Jesus. Our text is apocalyptic: meaning that it’s in the poetic realm of poetry as opposed to the exact clarity of prose. The poetry is intended to spark our imagination and move us to action. As you hear it what do you wonder about?

the Human One. This is a modern translation of the title “The Son of Man” that Jesus often uses from himself in the gospel. It comes from the poetic book of Daniel in which the prophet describes a vision of heaven opening onto earth and the heavenly population led by one like a son of man coming to the Ancient of days where he is given him dominion and glory and a kingdom. Daniel 7:13-14. It’s a title which portrays an apocalyptic bent.

Stay alert /agrypneite/ in Greek meaning - Stay awake! Keep on your guard! Don't stop paying attention! It's a call to active participation, discernment and involvement in what's going on in the world. It's at the theme of Advent (which means revealing or coming)...it's a call to stay active – looking, yearning for God's intervention in the world – even to work to be involved in bringing it about. It's not a passive hope as in “oh I wish this....” It's an active roll-up-your-sleeves involvement in our hope becoming reality.