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**Honest Suffering**  
**Series: The Weeping Prophet**  
**The Village Church at Shell Point**  
**Evening Service**  
**July 24, 2022**

I. **Introduction – Jeremiah 20**

- A. Depressing book – depressing chapter
- B. Kathleen Norris: Opening oneself to a prophet as anguished as Jeremiah is painful. On some mornings, I found it impossible.... The voice of Jeremiah is compelling, often on an overwhelmingly personal level. One morning, I was so worn out by the emotional roller coaster of Chapter 20 that after prayers I walked to my apartment and went back to bed. This passionate soliloquy, which begins with a bitter outburst on the nature of the prophet’s calling, moves quickly into denial. Jeremiah’s anger at the way his enemies deride him rears up, and also fear and sorrow. His statement of confidence in God seems forced under the circumstances, and a brief doxology feels more ironic than not, being followed by a bitter cry. The chapter concludes with an anguished question.
- C. Ministry is tough
  - 1. Being a Christian is tough
  - 2. John 16:33 (ESV) — 33 “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”
- D. Early experience of a personal attack in ministry
  - 1. Jean was leading a children’s choir; I was just helping
    - a. Trying to do a good job; got things organized
    - b. She had rules
    - c. One – if a child hadn’t come to rehearsal, they couldn’t participate in the presentation for the congregation
  - 2. Evening service – just before the service in which the choir was to sing
    - a. Youngster who hadn’t been to rehearsal showed up expecting to sing
    - b. Jean told her no; she left
  - 3. A few minutes later mother showed up – in front of all the kids, lost it
    - a. Berated Jean in one of the most angry outbursts we’d ever seen in a church!
  - 4. The following week we met with Pastor Miller
    - a. “How could such a thing be tolerated?”
    - b. Doug: “Welcome to ministry.”

II. **The Physical Danger of Faithful Ministry**

- A. **Jeremiah 20:1–6** (ESV) —

1. 1 Now Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer, who was chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.
2. 2 Then Pashhur beat Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin Gate of the house of the LORD.
3. 3 The next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, “The LORD does not call your name Pashhur, but [Magor-missabib] Terror on Every Side.
4. 4 For thus says the LORD: Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. They shall fall by the sword of their enemies while you look on. And I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. He shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall strike them down with the sword.
5. 5 Moreover, I will give all the wealth of the city, all its gains, all its prized belongings, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah into the hand of their enemies, who shall plunder them and seize them and carry them to Babylon.
6. 6 And you, Pashhur, and all who dwell in your house, shall go into captivity. To Babylon you shall go, and there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely.”

B. Pashhur

1. Chief of security
2. Responded to prophecies of destruction
  - a. Which he regarded as Treason

C. Nature of the punishment

1. Beating
  - a. Struck with some object
2. Stocks
  - a. Root = twisting
  - b. Probably not the same as we would see if we visited Williamsburg or Jamestown or other colonial application
  - c. Certainly uncomfortable

D. Faithful ministers are not immune to physical punishment, even unto death

1. **James**
  - a. **Acts 6:8–15** (ESV) — 8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.
  - b. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.
  - c. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.
  - d. 11 Then they secretly instigated men who said, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.”
  - e. 12 And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes,

and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, 13 and they set up false witnesses who said, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”

- f. 15 And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.
  - g. Acts 7 – James gives defense in face of priests
    - (1) Essentially a sermon on the whole history of Israel
  - h. Acts 7:51–60 (ESV) —
  - i. 51 “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.
  - j. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”
  - k. 54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.
  - l. 55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
  - m. 56 And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”
  - n. 57 But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.
  - o. 58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.
  - p. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”
  - q. 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
2. **Saul and early Christians**
- a. **Acts 8:1–3** (ESV) — 1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
  - b. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.
  - c. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.
3. **Paul**

- a. **2 Corinthians 11:22–28** (ESV) — 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I.
- b. 23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.
- c. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.
- d. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;
- e. 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;
- f. 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.
- g. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

E. **Historical examples**

- 1. **Polycarp (d. 155)**
  - a. Refused to burn incense to Caesar (“Caesar is Lord”)
  - b. Given an opportunity to recant; soldiers didn’t want to have to kill the old man
  - c. “Eighty and six years I have served Him. How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior. Bring forth what Thou wilt”
  - d. Burned at stake; stabbed with the fire failed to touch him

F. **Contemporary examples**

- 1. **Alliance missionaries early on in Africa**
  - a. More dead Alliance missionaries than live ones
  - b. How did they get through it?
  - c. One couple on the boat to Africa; told they could die
  - d. “We died before we came.”
- 2. **Boxer Rebellion – 1900; China**
  - a. 239 missionaries killed
  - b. CMA – 36 missionaries
- 3. **WWII**
  - a. CMA – 6 missionaries killed
  - b. 1945 – China – Eric Liddell (Chariots of Fire)
- 4. **Ecuador – 1956** (Movie: *End of the Spear*)
  - a. Jim Elliott, Roger Youderian, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming
  - b. Wife of Jim Elliott – Elizabeth (David Howard’s sister)
- 5. **Vietnam war**
  - a. 9 Alliance missionaries killed
  - b. Several have connections with Shell Point

6. **Sidon, Lebanon**
  - a. Bonnie Witherall – Women’s health clinic
  - b. Associate of Cheryl Phenicie
    - (1) Lay volunteer
- G. Beware of being the instrument of **Suffering for the Lord’s Anointed**
  1. **Pashhur** = largeness on every side
  2. Magor-missabib = terror on every side
  3. Curse called down on him and on his associates
    - a. Witness to the captivity of his friends
    - b. His own captivity with his household
    - c. Death in Babylon
  4. **David and Saul**
    - a. Amalekite killed the wounded Saul at Saul’s request; returned to tell David, expecting reward
    - b. **2 Samuel 1:14** (ESV) — 14 David said to him, “How is it you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the LORD’s anointed?”
    - c. David had him killed
  5. If that’s the end of one who attacks a sinning Lord’s anointed, what about one who’s faithful

### III. **The Psychological Cost of Faithful Ministry**

- A. **Jeremiah 20:7–10** (ESV) —
  1. 7 O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me.
  2. 8 For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, “Violence and destruction!” For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.
  3. 9 If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.
  4. 10 For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! “Denounce him! Let us denounce him!” say all my close friends, watching for my fall. “Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him.”
- B. **2 Corinthians 11:28** (ESV) — 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.
- C. Deceived by God
  1. Prophesied for decades about destruction from North
    - a. Nothing but false alarms
- D. Object of derision, laughingstock
  1. Jeremiah – would have become the daily object of jokes on late night TV
  2. Ryken: The comedians in Jerusalem were getting their funniest material at Jeremiah’s expense.
  3. All because he’s speaking the word of God!

- E. Internal conflict
  - 1. Tried to quit but can't
  - 2. Vance Havner: Jeremiah announces the impossible; he resigns and then declares immediately that he cannot resign; he quits but he cannot quit.
- F. His curse on Pashhur comes back on him
  - 1. Terror on every side
- G. Even his trusted friends turn on him
  - 1. Plot his demise
- H. Loneliness of ministry
  - 1. Pray for ministers, missionaries
  - 2. Have no idea what many go through psychologically

#### IV. **The Prayerful Disposition of the Faithful Minister**

- A. **Jeremiah 20:11–13** (ESV) —
  - 1. 11 But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.
  - 2. 12 O LORD of hosts, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.
  - 3. 13 Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers.
- B. Jeremiah at his best in the midst of suffering
  - 1. Goes to God in his suffering
    - a. As all great saints have done
  - 2. **Job** – Job 3 lamenting loss of family
    - a. **Job 3:1–5** (ESV) — 1 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.
    - b. 2 And Job said:
    - c. 3 “Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, ‘A man is conceived.’
    - d. 4 Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it.
    - e. 5 Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.
  - 3. **Elijah**
    - a. **1 Kings 19:4** (ESV) —
    - b. 4 But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree.
    - c. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”
    - d. That was after Elijah’s greatest victory!
  - 4. **David**
    - a. **Psalm 57** (ESV) — TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO DO NOT DESTROY. A MIKTAM OF DAVID, WHEN HE

FLED FROM SAUL, IN THE CAVE.

- b. 1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.
- c. 2 I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.
- d. 3 He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah
- e. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!
- f. 4 My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts—the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.
- g. 5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!
- h. 6 They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah
- i. 7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody!
- j. 8 Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn!
- k. 9 I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.
- l. 10 For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.
- m. 11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!
- n. Note the mingling of tears with praise!

5. **Jonah**

- a. **Jonah 2:1–9** (ESV) —
- b. 1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, 2 saying, “I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.
- c. 3 For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me.
- d. 4 Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.’
- e. 5 The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head 6 at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.
- f. 7 When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

- g. 8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.
  - h. 9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!”
6. **Jesus**
- a. **Matthew 27:46** (ESV) — 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
- C. **Jeremiah’s Confession**
- 1. **Jeremiah 20:11** (ESV) — 11 But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.
  - 2. Knows God is with him
    - a. The chief issue in ministry – is God with you
    - b. Moses – “If you don’t go with me, don’t send me...”
    - c. Joseph – “But God was with him...”
    - d. Bonhoeffer: I am lonely, but Thou leavest me not. I am restless, but with Thee there is peace.
  - 3. Knows who God is – dread warrior (champion)
    - a. Warrior, hero
    - b. God is the One to be Feared
    - c. The One who is with you is stronger than any enemy
    - d. 1 John 4:4 (ESV) — 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
  - 4. Calvin: Here the Prophet sets up God’s aid against all the plottings formed against him. However, then, might perfidious friends on one hand try privately to entrap him, and open enemies might on the other hand publicly oppose him, he yet doubted not but that God would be a sufficient protection to him.
  - 5. Those who attack God and attack His anointed, are bound to fail in the end
    - a. True of the history of Israel
    - b. Jeremiah knows it’s true for all time
- D. **Jeremiah’s Petition**
- 1. **Jeremiah 20:12** (ESV) — 12 O LORD of hosts, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.
  - 2. Recognizes that God’s knowledge is pervasive
  - 3. Asks to see God’s vengeance on his enemies
    - a. Doesn’t take vengeance on himself
    - b. Does want to be vindicated in his own lifetime
  - 4. Basis – has committed himself to God and ministry God gave him
  - 5. Careful – be careful to be in the same spiritual condition as Jeremiah – wholly committed to the ministry God gave him

- E. **Jeremiah's Doxology**
  - 1. **Jeremiah 20:13** (ESV) — 13 Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers.
  - 2. Sings!
    - a. Praise
  - 3. Senses deliverance from enemies
  - 4. Need to be reminded to sing in the face of suffering
  - 5. Acts 16 – Paul and Silas singing in prison
    - a. Led to their deliverance
- F. Jeremiah at his best
  - 1. Didn't last long

V. **The Painful Depths of Faithful Ministry**

- A. **Jeremiah 20:14–18** (ESV) —
  - 1. 14 Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!
  - 2. 15 Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, "A son is born to you," making him very glad.
  - 3. 16 Let that man be like the cities that the LORD overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon,
  - 4. 17 because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great.
  - 5. 18 Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?
- B. Curses the day of his birth
  - 1. Not his mother or God – death penalty for that
- C. Curses the messenger of good news to his father
  - 1. Like Sodom and Gomorrah
  - 2. Wished he was killed before birth
- D. Final question – Why?
  - 1. Went all the way back to birth
    - a. Didn't go back far enough
  - 2. **Jeremiah 1:5** (ESV) — 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."
- E. Jeremiah knows the answer to that question
  - 1. Question doesn't end the book, only the chapter
    - a. Ministry has its low points
  - 2. Jeremiah at his lowest
- F. How can one man, one faithful minister, have such a wide array of confusing and contradictory emotions, thoughts and dispositions?
  - 1. Ryken: We must recognize the confusing, almost schizophrenic nature of the Christian life. We are at one and the same time saints and sinners. Although our sins are forgiven, we continue to sin. One minute we praise, and the next we curse; one moment we rejoice in God's plan, and the very

next we resist his will.

- G. The most important lesson for us
  - 1. Derek Kidner: Together with other tortured cries from him and his fellow sufferers, these raw wounds in Scripture remain lest we forget the sharpness of the age-long struggle, or the frailty of the finest overcomers.
  - 2. Life is tough
    - a. We live in Disneyland
  - 3. Willing to go through even the most modest of inconveniences...
    - a. ... let alone sufferings...
    - b. ... for the sake of Christ?