



W H E N T H E  
**L O R D**  
C O M E S N E A R

H E H U M B L E S H I M S E L F

November 28, 2021 (Advent 1)

Jeremiah 33:14–16 (NIV) <sup>14</sup> “**The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah.** <sup>15</sup> “**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.** <sup>16</sup> **In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.’**

What makes you cry? I’m talking about any kind of crying - little sniffly crying, silent crying with tears running down your face, or a great big bawl with tears and runny nose and loud sobs. What makes you cry?

My name is Jeremiah. Does anyone know what my nickname was? “The Weeping Prophet.” I had lots to cry about. That doesn’t seem right, does it? A prophet of the LORD who spends more time crying than he does laughing? Let me share a little more about myself and my message, and maybe you’ll understand.

I’m a P.K - a priest’s kid. I grew up in the hill country of Benjamin and I came from a small town called Anathoth just a few miles north of Jerusalem. My dad served faithfully, and was blessed to work with a great king - one of the few who was faithful to the LORD - King Josiah. Josiah became king when he was 8 years old. Now that’s a story, but I don’t have time to tell that one. When Josiah was 21, the LORD called me as his prophet. I didn’t know why he wanted me. I was just a young man - mostly a boy. How could I be the prophet of the LORD? He would have expected him to use my dad for this, not me. The LORD told me, “**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**” (Jeremiah 1:5 NIV). The LORD had a plan for me, even though I had no idea what it was. He told me that I was his prophet, so I was his prophet.

That wasn’t a reason to shed tears, but when I heard about the message I was supposed to bring, that was a whole different story. “**Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my**

mouth and said to me, **“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”**” (Jeremiah 1:9–10 NIV). How was I supposed to do that? King Josiah was a good leader, but he had a lot to do in order to get the LORD’s people back on track. The LORD called me to help. I would have to say some really hard things.

I know that the prophet Isaiah had already warned my people about the destruction that the LORD would send. He told King Hezekiah, **“The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD”** (Isaiah 39:6 NIV). 100 years ago, the Babylonians were nothing but a group of warlike barbarians. Much had changed. The Babylonians, led by their famous general Nebuchadnezzar, defeated the powerful Assyrian empire. Babylon was the rising power. On days when the air was clear and the wind blew from the north, I could hear the sound of armor clanking, chariots creaking, and warriors clashing. The storm was coming. My job? To tell my people that the storm was coming for them! **“Listen! The report is coming— a great commotion from the land of the north! It will make the towns of Judah desolate, a haunt of jackals.”** (Jeremiah 10:22 NIV).

Would you cry if you had to bring that message to people you loved? I had to share this news with my father Hilkiah, with my mother and the rest of my family. At least they listened! They believed it. So many more refused to listen. That’s when the pain and sorrow overwhelmed me. I had to repeat the same message of destruction and punishment over and over, just with different pictures. Here’s just one of them. The LORD told me to buy a new linen undergarment. New clothing was hard to come by with the Babylonians advancing and the Egyptians retreating. Let me tell you - it was expensive! The soft weave of the cloth felt so good as I slipped it on. But then the LORD told me to take it off and go down to the river. I had to stuff it in a crack in the rocks close to the river bed. I hated to do that to such a beautiful piece of clothing, but I did what the LORD told me to do. I had almost forgotten about it when a few months later the LORD told me to go get it. I was so happy - I could have my beautiful clothing back. When I found the spot I had hidden it, I started to cry. Mud and water had seeped into the crack where I had hidden it. My beautiful garment was ruined!

The LORD had a reason for telling me to ruin this perfectly good piece of clothing. He was going to ruin the city of Jerusalem, the temple, even the people because they had been unfaithful to him. The prophecies that followed became more vivid and detailed. The LORD would send a terrible drought. Farmers would look at the cracked ground and despair. People would beg for water because the wells and cisterns were empty. Animals would die due to the lack of food and water. Have you ever had to watch people suffer in such a way? I had to weep at the pain my prophecy would cause!

I didn’t just weep for the people. I also wept for myself. **“Then the word of the LORD came to me: “You must not marry and have sons or daughters in this place.”**” (Jeremiah 16:1–2 NIV). I wept at that. I had always wanted to find a wife - someone to share my life with, someone to come home to at night and find comfort with all the pain and heartache my

ministry brought. I wanted to have children to love and raise to love the LORD their God. I wept because I would never have a family. The LORD was being merciful to me. He knew that awful times were coming, times that I would not want a wife to see or children to experience. The LORD promised to send deadly diseases. So many people would die that there wouldn't be time or a place to bury them. Soldiers would show no mercy with their swords. They would kill young and old alike. The carnage would be so complete that wild animals and birds would feast on the dead. I wept for the loss of life. My pastor's heart ached when I saw these things begin to happen. The worst part of it was I couldn't serve them. The LORD told me, **"Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal; do not go to mourn or show sympathy, because I have withdrawn my blessing, my love and my pity from this people," declares the LORD**" (Jeremiah 16:5 NIV). That brought such tears to my eyes. These people I loved, people I wanted to see in heaven, had so thoroughly rejected the LORD that they would receive no mercy! They had set up statues to other gods in their homes, on the hills outside their towns, and even in the LORD's own temple! The kings, David's own descendants, offered their sons as burnt offerings to these gods. Lying prophets told them and the people that everything was fine and the LORD was good with everything they were doing! **"Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people"** (Jeremiah 9:1 NIV). How my heart broke as I saw the results of their rejection!

I weep for you and your generation too. Your people worship the same idols. Some are made of stone and wood - their houses, or the monuments they build to honor human beings instead of the one true God. Some are made of fine cloth like my linen belt - they worship fashion and beauty that so quickly fades away to ruin. Some sacrifice their children - no in fire, but in the womb because they have made life and their personal choices more important than the LORD. I see these personal gods that you all bring wherever you go, slim tablets with fingers moving rapidly. These good things have become gods, and so I weep for you as I wept for myself. I know that in my heart I was just as guilty of following other gods. I was just as weak as my fellow Israelites in the way I served the LORD and followed his commands. When my father discovered the book of the Law and King Josiah read it to all of us, I realized just how wrong I was, just how disobedient and dishonest I had been. I weep because I know that you are no different from me - imperfect, sinful, and sometimes just plain rebellious. I cry because of who I am and who you are and know that God should not be merciful to us.

I may be the "Weeping Prophet," but I was also privileged not only to tear down with my message but also build up with words of hope and promise. I had this good news to share: **"The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah'."** (Jeremiah 33:14 NIV). Good promise? There were so many punishing promises! The LORD did make good promises - a good word - to me and the rest of his people. He promised that Jerusalem would be rebuilt. The temple would stand once again. He would **"cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me"** (Jeremiah 33:8 NIV). His people would once again bring

sacrifices to the temple and shout, **“Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever!”** (Jeremiah 33:11 NIV).

What could cause the LORD to change his mind and show such mercy? Listen to this! I got to tell everyone this! **“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 Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.”** (Jeremiah 33:15–16 NIV). During my ministry, I watched the line of David wither and die. There were no more direct heirs to take the throne. Nebuchadnezzar killed King Zedekiah’s sons in front of the king’s eyes and then blinded him. Zedekiah became a slave in a Babylonian prison. No more kings from his line. Or so it seemed. Have you ever seen a tree stump with a new, living branch grow from it? The LORD was going to do something amazing, something impossible! He would make a **“righteous Branch”** sprout. This new King would be righteous - perfect, holy, only saying and doing what is just and right. This Branch had a special name - **“The LORD Our Righteousness.”** His job? He would do much more than save Judah and make Jerusalem a safe place to live. He would save people from sin! In a few weeks you’ll hear these words from a prophet named Luke. He wrote, **“In those days...the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. ...Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Messiah, the LORD”** (Luke 2:1, 6-7, 11 NIV).

**“In those days.”** The LORD had Luke write the same phrase to connect my words with his. This little baby boy, born in such humility, is the righteous Branch from David’s line. This boy Jesus is **“The LORD Our Righteous Savior”**! My tears that flowed with the severity of the LORD’s judgment can find hope in the promised one, the Savior! One of the psalmists put it this way: **“Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy”** (Psalm 126:5 NIV). As I sat under arrest in the king’s palace, I knew that my work was not worthless. It would be worth it, even when the king had me thrown into a muck-filled cistern, or when he tried to have me assassinated, or when he cut up my scroll and burned it piece by piece. My tears would lead to intense, true joy because I have a Savior! You have a Savior! I can’t tell you how precious that news is. I can’t share with words how special it is to share it with someone else and see their eyes light up with recognition. This gift of faith is so special, so valuable. Hold onto it with the strength that your Savior Jesus gives. Don’t be afraid to talk to your friends and neighbors about him. Believe me - it may lead to tears, lots of tears. You will find heartache. You will also find joy, amazing, inestimable joy when just one person hears your message and meets Jesus as their Savior for the first time. That won’t bring weeping, just tears of joy! You can count on it, from one weeping prophet to another. Amen!

To God alone the glory! Pastor Jon Brohn