

A Cloud of Witnesses: Jeremiah, the unwilling prophet

Jeremiah shows us that contemplation is the source of the active life of a prophet. After his initial calling God says to Jeremiah 'what do you see?' A prophet is one who attentively listens and looks, not only to God within more formal times of prayer but to what is happening in the marketplace, the law courts, the city streets. There is no division here between sacred and secular. He looks and listens attentively in the presence of God, in openness to God; it is from this place of contemplation that words and actions arise. 'The word of the Lord came to me', Jeremiah says, and it comes as he listens and looks.

Mixing Bowl

Imagine you have a mixing bowl. Into it you put what you see, hear, and experience. Some of what goes in might relate to your personal life; some from what you have seen on the news or what you have heard from other people you have been in contact with. Stir the mix in the presence of God. Perhaps you find yourself in conversation with God – sharing your feelings or asking questions. Now stop actively stirring the ingredients, but remain in the presence of God. This part of the process takes time – you will need to wait and be attentive.

See what develops from your mixing bowl. Perhaps it will be clarity about what to pray for, or what response to make. You may begin to discern some action that belongs to you to take.

Act hope

See, the siege-ramps have been cast up against the city to take it, and the city, faced with sword, famine, and pestilence, has been given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. Yet you, O Lord GOD, have said to me, 'Buy the field for money and get witnesses'.

[Jeremiah 32.24-25]

Ask God for clarity about an action of hope you might take this week
Like Jeremiah, your action may speak hope into a place of desolation, seemingly absent from care and love.

Are you invited to act hope in another person's life? Does it involve a response to what is lacking in your local community? Does it relate to a wider issue – the environment perhaps or a group of people whose needs tend to be neglected. Don't be discouraged by the seeming smallness of your action set against the

difficult reality you become aware of. Acts of hope will always make some difference – they will always be worthwhile.

What do you need God to equip you for?

Then I said, 'Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.'

But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, "I am only a boy"; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.

Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.'

Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth'. [Jeremiah 1.6-9]

Is there some task, or some movement in your life that you sense called to undertake, yet feel inadequate for? Like Jeremiah, share your feelings openly and honestly with God. Ask for whatever help you need to go forward.



Daring to be different

Jeremiah's words and actions often placed him in opposition to those around him. He didn't seek to be different for the sake of it: the cause of justice, mercy and truth led him beyond the expectations of those around him. There come

moments when we are invited to step beyond what is comfortable and seen as 'normal'.

- Is there a need for you in this moment to have the courage to go against the common current of thought and attitude and action?
- Are you challenged to be creatively different and counted odd, for the sake of God's kingdom and the wellbeing of all God's creation?
- Is this a moment for you not to belong, not to just go with the flow?
- What in practice does this mean for you?