

Adult Teaching Resources

September 29, 2019



Season After Pentecost (June 16-November 24)

On the Road with Jesus

Luke 14:1-14 (RCL 1, 7-14) – “A Way to the Top”

Choices That Matter

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 – “Make the Right Choice!”

Jeremiah 4:11-28 (RCL 11-12, 22-28) – “Delay and You’ll Pay”

Jeremiah 8:18-9:3 (RCL 8:18-9:1) – “Go on and Grieve”

Jeremiah 32:1-15 (RCL 32:1-3a, 6-15) – “Never Give Up”

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Never Give Up

Jeremiah 32:1-15 (RCL 32:1-3a, 6-15)

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.” Jeremiah 32:15

One of the most powerful words we have, as followers of God, is hope.

When life gets to be so heavy, so distracting, so painful, so bad...we hold on to the hope that tomorrow will be better, even just a little bit. The hope we hold on to, is a gift from God.

Today, we read about the hope Jeremiah had as God encouraged him to never give up, no matter how bad things might seem. Maybe his words are exactly what we need to hear today.

Opening

After everyone arrives, remain in the large group. Move to the board and write the word “Hope” on it.

Ask your group to share their thoughts and ideas about Hope with these questions:

How do you define Hope?

How do you experience Hope?

When have you most needed Hope in your life?

How does God manifest Hope for you?

How are you a Hope for others?

What would life be like without Hope?

Spend some time discussing Hope before moving to the scripture passage.

Reading the Bible

When did the word come to Jeremiah? (in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.)

What was happening at that time? (the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah)

What was the main part of the prophecy for King Zedekiah? (I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it)

In the prophecy, who would come to Jeremiah with a real estate proposition? (Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum)

In the prophecy what was the real estate proposition? (Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.)

What happened? (Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the Lord, and said to me, “Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.”)

What did Jeremiah do? (bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. 10 I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales.)

Who did he give the deed of purchase to? (Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah)

What did God say to do with the deed of purchase? (Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time.)

Making Connections

What is the longest span of time you had to endure something bad—pain of loss, grief of death, unemployment, anything that caused deep, emotional distress? What did you endure? How long did you endure it? What helped you get through? Where did you find hope?

Our Lesson Writer succinctly explains the dilemma in today’s passage,

“King Zedekiah, a stubborn man strongly influenced by priests and temple prophets who believed God would not allow Jerusalem to fall, was determined to hold fast and fight.

Jeremiah, on the other hand, boldly proclaimed that the city was doomed.”

When have you experienced a leader, religious or otherwise, holding on to a belief that you knew was doomed to failure? What was the situation? What did you do about it? What was the ultimate result?

Have you ever been silenced, or encouraged to be silent, for speaking out against the powers of authority? What happened to you? How were you silenced?

Making Connections *continued*

Prophets are given the unenviable task of delivering difficult messages to men in power. How would you handle that role, if you were in Jeremiah's shoes? Would you gloat with the power and authority of God on your side? Would you meekly enter the king's court with bad news? How would you handle the situation?

Where do you look for hope in difficult situations? What does hope do for your attitude and outlook?

When have you had the opportunity to help out a family member with a financial transaction? What was the opportunity? What did you decide to do?

When things get really bad in your life, where do you find God? Have you ever not found God when something happened? How did you endure? What did you learn about God from that situation? What did you learn about yourself from that situation?

So What?

With everyone remaining in the large group, share the words of our Lesson Writer:

“Jeremiah's purchase in the face of looming disaster was the promise of a day beyond the exile when the people would return, when fields and houses around Jerusalem would once again be bought and sold. As God was bringing disaster upon Judah, God would also bring a better day:

‘Fields shall be bought for money, and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, of the hill country, of the Shephelah, and of the Negeb; for I will restore their fortunes, says the LORD’ (v. 44).”

Give your group time to think about those words, then ask questions like these for discussion:

When have you had the opportunity to do something that at the time didn't fit in the situation, but ultimately would provide hope? What was the situation? What did you do?

How does God show up for you and give you Hope when things are bad?

How important is Hope for you and your faith journey?

What do we know about God from Hope? What do you learn about God from Hope? What does Hope say about our faith?

If Jeremiah were around today, what would he do or say that would give us Hope?

Spend time discussing Hope in God, especially when things are difficult and challenging.

The Challenge

This week, look for signs of hope around you. When you find one, write it down, and then give thanks to God for that sign. At the end of the week, review all the signs of hope you found.

Prayer

Loving God, we know you are with us, even in challenging and difficult times. Thank you for the signs of hope you gave to Jeremiah, and thank you for the signs of hope you give to us. Open our eyes so that we might clearly see you at work in the world, which gives us hope. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

The text—The Revised Common Lectionary text for the day is Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15, which obviously skips over several verses of text. These verses are integral to understanding the larger text, so we will study 32:1-15, along with some brief comments about the remainder of the chapter.

Siege warfare—One of the best-known examples of siege warfare in the ancient world is the Assyrian king Sennacherib’s defeat of Lachish – the second largest city in Judah – in 701 BCE. Sennacherib was so proud of his army’s accomplishment that he had illustrations of the battle carved in relief onto large gypsum panels that were used to decorate an entire room of his palace in Nineveh, near modern day Mosul, Iraq.

The panels, more than seven feet tall, were discovered by Austen Henry Layard during excavations in 1845-1847. They decorated a room (designated Room XXXVI) in the central part of Sennacherib’s southwest palace. Several of the panels were obtained by the British Museum on 1856, and remain there.

One panel, from a replica in the Israel Museum, shows archers advancing as two battering rams are pushed up stone ramps built against the city walls. Defenders of Lachish helplessly try to stop the attack with stones and torches. At the bottom, civilians flee through the gate as three men – probably city officials – are impaled on stakes.

Nebuchad-who?—You may have noticed that in some parts of Jeremiah (as in Ezekiel), the Babylonian king is called Nebuchadnezzar, while most biblical references (including a number in Jeremiah) spell the king’s name as Nebuchadnezzar.

Both are attempts to render the king’s Babylonian name into a Hebrew spelling. In Babylonian, his name was spelled *Nabu-kudurri-utser*, meaning “May (the god) Nabu protect my boundary stone.”

Nebuchadnezzar, then, is a bit closer to the Babylonian spelling, but in the lesson we will stick with the more familiar Nebuchadnezzar.

How many shekels?—Calibrated stones used as weights for measuring precious metal suggest that the shekel in ancient times was about 0.40 ounces, so 17 shekels of silver would be about seven ounces. At today’s prices, that would be worth about \$100.

For comparative purposes, David reportedly paid 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor and oxen of Araunah (2 Samuel 24:24).

Digging Deeper *continued*

Saving scrolls—It was not uncommon for scrolls to be “filed” in earthenware jars for safekeeping. The preservation of the Dead Sea Scrolls – hidden in tall pottery jars for 1900 years before their discovery – attests to the effectiveness of the method, especially in a dry climate. The jars, on display at Qumran, were among those found in nearby caves.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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Why does Jeremiah 32 reflect actions from Jeremiah 37?

The book of Jeremiah is often confusing because it does not follow a careful chronological order, as most modern readers expect. The book, reportedly compiled by Jeremiah's friend and scribe Baruch, often arranges materials based on subject matter rather than chronology.

The first 24 chapters are prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem, but in no particular order, and many lack any real context that would indicate a date. Other collections focus on oracles against foreign nations (chapters 25, 46-51), episodes from Jeremiah's life (chapters 26-35), and historical narratives (chapters 36-45, 52).

Today's text is part of a hopeful section, often called "The Book of Consolation," found in chapters 30-33. The activities described in chapter 32, however, appear to reflect a narrative that isn't related until chapter 37. That chapter describes a time late in Zedekiah's reign, when a threat from Egypt had forced the Babylonians to temporarily lift their siege of Jerusalem.

Zedekiah sent messengers asking Jeremiah to pray for him (37:1-5), but Jeremiah's response was a clear prediction that the Babylonians would return and defeat the city, burning it to the ground (37:6-10).

While the siege was lifted, Jeremiah attempted to visit his hometown of Anathoth, a short distance northwest of Jerusalem. When he reached the gate, however, he was arrested and charged with trying to desert to the Babylonians (also called Chaldeans during this period). An official named Jonathan had him beaten and imprisoned in an underground cell (37:11-16).

Zedekiah summoned Jeremiah to be brought for a private audience and asked "Is there any word from the LORD?" Jeremiah replied that there was indeed: "You shall be handed over to the king of Babylon" (37:17).

Jeremiah then complained about his imprisonment and asked to be released from Jonathan's dungeon, whereupon the king remanded him to be held in the court of the guard and given a loaf of bread each day for as long as it lasted (37:18-21).

These actions appear to describe the situation we read about in today's text, even though it appears earlier, in chapter 32. This may confuse modern readers, but it helps to understand that ancient writers were not nearly as concerned with chronology as we are: Baruch's account is organized by subject matter, not by a timeline.