



WESTLAWN UMC


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# *Faith for tough times: The message of the prophet Jeremiah*

*Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah:  
"I will restore you to health and heal your wounds  
I have loved you with an everlasting love  
I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt"*

A photograph of a small, green, spiky plant growing out of a crack in a sandy surface. The plant has several thin, upright stems with small, pointed leaves. The sand is light-colored and textured. The image is used as a background for the text "TOUGH FAITH FOR HARD TIMES".

TOUGH FAITH FOR HARD TIMES



## A Fire Shut Up in my Bones /Un Fuego arde en mis huesos

**WESTLAWN UMC                      122 S. SAN MANUEL, SAN ANTONIO TX**  
**PASTOR LILIANA PADILLA                      CELL 325-315-8735                      SEPTIEMBRE 6, 2020**

Welcome / Pray

Call to Worship

We have come to worship God, the living God

Who calls prophets and teachers

to bear witness.

We have come to praise God,

the almighty God,

Who answers the forces of hatred and

hurt with the power of grace.

We have come to worship God, all-gracious God,

Who chooses even you and me,

to receive and carry the Word of life and hope.

All glory to God!

**WORSHIP TIME**

**CHILDREN'S TIME**

**OFFERING**

<sup>7</sup> *Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

*2 Corinthians 9:7*

Llamado a la adoración

Hemos venido a adorar a Dios, el Dios viviente.

Quién llama a profetas y maestros para dar testimonio.

Hemos venido a alabar a Dios,  
el Dios todopoderoso,

Quien responde a las fuerzas del odio  
y el dolor con el poder de la gracia.

Hemos venido a adorar a Dios,  
Dios todo misericordioso,

¿Quién elige incluso tú y yo?

para recibir y llevar la Palabra de vida  
y esperanza. Toda la gloria a Dios!

**TIEMPO DE ALABANDA**

**TIEMPO PARA LOS NIÑOS**

**OFRENDA:**

Cada uno de como propuso en su Corazon  
no con tristeza o por necesidad porque  
Dios ama al dador alegre.

*2 Corintios 9:7*

## Ways You Can Send Us Your Offerings

- [www.myiglesiawestlawn.org](http://www.myiglesiawestlawn.org)
- By email: Rene de la Cruz  
9446 Hindi Drive, San Antonio TX 78224

**Prayer for illumination:** *Loving God, enter into our hearts. Help us to receive you with joy and thanksgiving. Instill in each of us the mind of Christ, that we may be your disciples on this earth. In Jesús name Amen.*

### **Bible Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-9**

4 The word of the Lord came to me, saying,  
5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew[a] you,  
before you were born I set you apart;  
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

6 "Alas, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young."

7 But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

9 Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

### **Jeremiah 20:7-9 Jeremiah's Complaint**

7 You deceived[a] me, Lord, and I was deceived[b];  
you overpowered me and prevailed.

*I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me.*

8 Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long.

9 But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones.

*I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.*

## **SERMON: A Fire Shut Up in my Bones**

### **Holy Communion**

### **Blessing**

**\*Formas en que usted puede hacernos llegar sus ofrendas.**

-A traves de la pagina: [www.myiglesiawestlawn.org](http://www.myiglesiawestlawn.org)

-Por correo regular al hermano Rene de La Cruz

Cheque a nombre de la Iglesia Westlawnd  
9446 Hindi Drive, San Antonio TX 78224

**Oración por la iluminación:** Amado Dios, entra en nuestros corazones. Ayúdanos a recibirte con alegría y acción de gracias. Infunde en cada uno de nosotros la mente de Cristo, para que podamos ser sus discípulos en esta tierra.

En el nombre de Jesús.

### **Lectura biblica: Jeremías 1:4-9**

#### **Llamamiento de Jeremías**

4 La palabra del Señor vino a mí: 5 «Antes de formarte en el vientre, ya te había elegido; antes de que nacieras, ya te había apartado; te había nombrado profeta para las naciones».

6 Yo le respondí: «¡Ah, Señor mi Dios! ¡Soy muy joven, y no sé hablar!»

7 Pero el Señor me dijo: «No digas: "Soy muy joven", porque vas a ir adondequiera que yo te envíe, y vas a decir todo lo que yo te ordene. 8 No le temas a nadie, que yo estoy contigo para librarte». Lo afirma el Señor. Luego extendió el Señor la mano y, tocándome la boca, me dijo: «He puesto en tu boca mis palabras.

### **Jeremías 20:7-9 :Quejas de Jeremías.**

7 ¡Me sedujiste, Señor, y yo me dejé seducir!

Fuiste más fuerte que yo, y me venciste.

Todo el mundo se burla de mí; se ríen de mí todo el tiempo. 8 Cada vez que hablo, es para gritar:

«¡Violencia! ¡Violencia!» Por eso la palabra

del Señor no deja de ser para mí un oprobio y una burla. 9 Si digo: «No me acordaré más de él, ni hablaré más en su nombre», entonces su palabra en mi interior se vuelve un fuego ardiente que me cala hasta los huesos.

He hecho todo lo posible por contenerla, pero ya no puedo más.

## **SERMON: Un fuego que arde en mis huesos**

### **Santa Comunión**

### **BENDICION**





# GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

WEEKLY GUIDE SEPTEMBER 6-12, 2020

## Sermon

### Faith for Tough Times

#### A Fire Shut Up in My Bones

## Scripture References:

Jeremiah 1:4-9 and 20:7-9

*Things I'd like to remember from the sermon:*

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## PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Dear God, Jeremiah listened for your voice, and for forty years faithfully passed your message on to his people. His story shows our human slowness to trust that you really are on our side. His writing highlighted your steadfast, pursuing love in spite of our obtuseness. Help me to increase my capacity to listen, as he did, and to day by day build a trusting relationship with you that can endure whatever life brings my way. Amen.

## MONDAY

### Jeremiah 1:1-3

We learn quite a bit about Jeremiah in these first few verses of his book. He was born to a family of priests in Anathoth, a small village near Jerusalem. He probably descended from a priest King Solomon banished to Anathoth for supporting a rival for the throne (1 Kings 2:26). His prophetic ministry spanned about forty years—he spent his life serving God.

- These verses name the three principal kings of Jeremiah's time. In total, the prophet spoke the word of the Lord during the reigns of five kings. Who has been or is influential in your life? How hard would it be to "speak your truth" to the powerful people you know? How good are you at receiving it if other people speak their truth to you?
- Jeremiah's heritage (a priestly family that stood apart from the ruling monarchy) seems to have shaped his ministry. He spoke with firm integrity, unmoved by what Judah's rulers wished he would say. In what ways have your family history and life experiences shaped you? How might God use your unique qualities and experiences?

## TUESDAY

### Jeremiah 1:4-18

Jeremiah, like many others God called, thought himself an unlikely candidate for God's work. He was young, maybe younger than King Josiah (who was only 21 when God called Jeremiah to prophesy). He said he did not know how to speak. God could see what Jeremiah couldn't. God called him a "fortified city," an "iron pillar," and said, "Do not be afraid of them."

- God told Jeremiah he was born to be a prophet (verse 5), and promised to be with him (verses 8 and 18). Though God at times works through our weaknesses, most often he uses our strengths. What are you good at? What do you find joy in doing? How can you let God to shape who you are and what you do to spread the message of God's love?
- Jeremiah thought he couldn't possibly be God's prophet. He wasn't alone. Moses had a speech impediment. Rahab, who helped the Israelites defeat Jericho, was a prostitute. Mary, Jesus' mother, was a young peasant girl. What flaws in yourself do you think disqualify you for God's service? Ask God to show you who you are in his sight.

## WEDNESDAY

### Jeremiah 37:11-38:10

Jeremiah's enemies falsely accused him of deserting to the Babylonians. They accurately accused him of preaching that Babylon would conquer Jerusalem. His mission was tough and unpopular, and made him many enemies. King Zedekiah's weakness and wavering were similar to the way Herod dealt with John the Baptist, and Pontius Pilate with Jesus.

- Physical captivity is probably not a major issue for most of us. Other forces, though (e.g. broken relationships, financial struggles, addictions, various fears), may hold us captive and keep us from living our lives fully and with purpose. What's holding you back? How can you open your life to God (even if, like Jeremiah, your bad situation was created by people you can't control), and seek divine help to free you from your prison?
- Are you more like those in 38:1 who wanted to "kill the messenger" who was challenging them on God's behalf, or Ebed-melek, the official who stood up against their plot? Are you willing to hear God's message to you even if it calls you to change your ways?

## THURSDAY

### Jeremiah 39:8 - 40:6

Jeremiah repeatedly warned that Babylon would conquer and destroy Jerusalem. It finally happened—Jerusalem fell, with awful destruction. Perhaps understandably, the conquerors treated Jeremiah better than his own people had. But, allowed to go anywhere he chose, he decided to stay with the poor Israelites who were left behind in the ruined city.

- Jeremiah must have felt quite a range of emotions during these events. He wrote that his nation's fate broke his heart (Jeremiah 8:18-22). Yet amid sorrow and ruin, he was set free. How have you learned to find blessings even in the darkest times? Each day share your gratitude for God's presence in good and bad times with someone close to you.
- Sometimes we can see a hard time coming, as Jeremiah did. An illness slowly takes a loved one, or financial problems mount until we face bankruptcy. We may pray over and over—as countless Jews must have prayed for the defeat of the Babylonians. How can dark times deepen your relationship with God rather than destroying it?

#### **FRIDAY**      **Jeremiah 42:7 - 43:7**

Sad and afraid, the remaining citizens of Judah thought it safe and logical to travel to Babylon's rival Egypt. They sought God's direction through Jeremiah, who (again) offered less popular counsel: stay in Judah, and God will protect you. In spite of the Lord's assurance, the remnant marched off to Egypt, and forced Jeremiah to go with them.

- In times of severe trial, seeking God's voice comes very naturally. Obeying what God calls us to do is often a different story, as it was here. How do you listen for God's direction in your life? What are some barriers that keep you either from listening to or obeying God? What steps can you take to break through those barriers?
- Jeremiah waited ten days for the word of the Lord. Why do you believe it sometimes takes time for God's will and purpose to become clear, even if you're listening for it? Can you recall times when your sense of hurry made you give up listening for God? How might your decisions change if you allowed more time to think and listen?

#### **SATURDAY**      **Jeremiah 32:1-15**

Many of Jeremiah's messages were painful and unpleasant for the people (and especially the kings) of Judah. But Jeremiah also echoed the rest of the Bible in saying that with God the worst thing is never the last thing. Just before Jerusalem fell, he formally bought a piece of property at God's direction. Though real estate prices were surely very low, his motive was not economic, but prophetic. "This is worth it," he said, "because God promises that 'houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.'"

- Though it may not bring responses as severe as it did to Jeremiah, "speaking the truth in love" is not always easy. Yet honesty and accountability are a key to relationships that help us grow spiritually. Has anyone ever challenged you in a way that offered hope as well as a call to change direction? How can you seek to ensure that your efforts to hold those you care about accountable ultimately lead to hope rather than despair?

**Family Activity:** God used who Jeremiah was (strengths and weaknesses) to fulfill God's purpose. Select an age-appropriate television show or movie about a family to watch as a family. Before you view the show, ask everyone to notice ways the family uses their strengths and weaknesses to show love and kindness, serve others, and live Christian values (intended or unintended). (Be sure to include a fun treat!) After the show, identify and discuss these characteristics, words, or events. Use this discussion to lead into identifying your family's strengths and weaknesses. Create a family poster with drawings and words celebrating who you are as a family and display it in your home. Offer your strengths and weaknesses to God in prayer, asking God to use them all for His purpose.

## **LIFTING UP OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN PRAYER**

### **Prayers of Praise:**

### **Prayers for Health & Healing:**

Church family undergoing long-term medical treatment:

### **Prayers for Comfort:**

### **Prayers for**



## Children Sermon: Yes You Can!

But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. Jeremiah 1:7-8 (NIV)

"I just can't do it!" Have you ever said that? Of course you have, we have all said that at one time or another. Maybe you said it when the soccer coach asked you to take the penalty shot that would win the game, or when your piano teacher asked you to play a difficult piece on a recital. Maybe it was when the teacher called on you to give a book report in front of the whole class.

Jacob was a good student. Oh, he wasn't the smartest kid in class, but he worked hard and made pretty good grades. His worst subject was arithmetic. Addition and subtraction didn't give him any trouble, but when it came to long division, he just didn't get it. One day as he sat struggling with his assignment, he finally threw down his pencil and cried out in frustration, "I just can't do it!" His teacher, Mrs. Davis, smiled at Jacob and said, "Can't never could do anything. Here, let me help you." Mrs. Davis went over to Jacob's desk and showed him step by step what he had to do to solve the problem. With his teacher's help, suddenly long division didn't seem so hard after all.

Our Bible lesson today is about a man named Jeremiah. One day, God spoke to Jeremiah and said, "Before you were even born, I chose you to be my prophet to all the nations."

Jeremiah answered, "I can't! I'm not a good speaker, and besides, I'm too young."

"Don't say 'I can't'" the LORD answered Jeremiah. "If I tell you to go and speak to someone, then go! And when I tell you what to say, don't leave out a word!" Then the LORD reached out his hand, and touched Jeremiah's mouth and said, "I am giving you the words to say, and I am sending you with authority to speak to the nations for me."

There will be times in your life when God will come to you, as he did to Jeremiah, and ask you to do something special for him. He may call you to be a preacher, a missionary, or a Sunday School teacher. Whatever it is that God calls you to do in this life, remember what he said to Jeremiah, "Don't say, 'I can't!'" If God calls you to do something, he will reach out his hand and touch your life to give you the ability to do it.

**Dear Father, there may be some things in this life that we cannot do. But we know that if you ask us to do something, you will give us the ability to do it if we will just trust in you. Amen.**

**Craft:** Make a "can can" to help students remember God's strength provides for us in all circumstances. Provide each student with an empty canister (coffee, oats, etc) and allow time to decorate the outside of the can. Inside the can, students can place items to remind them of God's presence and faithfulness. They can also add prayer requests or worries of their own, in a display of casting cares on God. For older students, this might mean providing slips of paper and/or written Bible verses. For younger students, the can may hold pictures, stickers, or simple words.

Close with prayer and reminder of God's work in our lives. Thank God for reminding us that He is in control of all circumstances, and ask for help in completing the missions He gives us.

# THE CALLING OF JEREMIAH



"Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child.  
But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all  
that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."

**JEREMIAH 1:6-7**

# TOUGH FAITH FOR HARD TIMES

**Cracked Cisterns that Hold No Water / Cisternas rotas, sin agua**

**WESTLAWN UMC  
PASTOR LILIANA PADILLA**

**122 S. SAN MANUEL, SAN ANTONIO TX  
CELL 325-315-8735      SEPTIEMBRE 13, 2020**

**Welcome / Pray**

**Opening Prayer**

**Creator God, all creation is your handiwork;**

**your touch gives life to all that is.**

**You who shape and form us by the breathe of your**

**Spirit and the touch of your grace,**

**you alone are able to call forth from the depths of  
our being the beauty of your Spirit in us.**

**May we in this celebration,**

**surrender more deeply to your loving touch,**

**as you fashion and form you heart's desire in us.**

**This we pray in your Spirit. Amen.**

**WORSHIP TIME**

**CHILDREN'S TIME**

**OFFERING**

*<sup>7</sup> Each of you should give what you have decided in  
your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compul-  
sion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

*2 Corinthians 9:7*

**Oracion Inicial.**

**Dios creador, toda la creación es tu obra;**

**tu toque da vida a todo lo que es.**

**Tú que nos moldeas y nos formas por el aliento de  
tu Espíritu y el toque de tu gracia,**

**solo tú puedes llamarnos desde lo más profundo  
de nuestro ser, y darnos La belleza de tu Espíritu en  
nosotros.**

**Que podamos en esta celebración,**

**Rendirnos más profundamente a tu toque amoro-  
so, mientras nos moldeas y nos formas al deseo de  
tu corazón.**

**Esto nosotros te lo pedimos por tu Espíritu. Amén.**

**TIEMPO DE ALABANDA**

**TIEMPO PARA LOS NINOS**

**OFRENDA:**

**Cada uno de como propuso en su Corazon  
no con tristeza o por necesidad porque  
Dios ama al dador alegre.**

**2 Corintios 9:7**



## Ways You Can Send Us Your Offerings

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*Prayer for illumination: Loving God, enter into our hearts. Help us to receive you with joy and thanksgiving. Instill in each of us the mind of Christ, that we may be your disciples on this earth. In Jesús name Amen.*

### **Bible Reading: Jeremiah 2:1-9, 11-13**

2 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "This is what the Lord says: "'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown. 3 Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them,'" declares the Lord. 4 Hear the word of the Lord, you descendants of Jacob, all you clans of Israel. 5 This is what the Lord says: "What fault did your ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. 6 They did not ask, 'Where is the Lord, who brought us up out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness, through a land of deserts and ravines, a land of drought and utter darkness, a land where no one travels and no one lives?' 7 I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable. 8 The priests did not ask, 'Where is the Lord?' Those who deal with the law did not know me; the leaders rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols. 9 "Therefore I bring charges against you again," declares the Lord. "And I will bring charges against your children's children. 11 Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols. 12 Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the Lord. 13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

**\*Formas en que usted puede hacernos llegar sus ofrendas.**

**-A traves de la pagina: [www.myiglesiawestlawn.org](http://www.myiglesiawestlawn.org)**

**-Por correo regular al hermano Rene de La Cruz**

**Cheque a nombre de la Iglesia Westlawnd**

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**Oración por la iluminación:** Amado Dios, entra en nuestros corazones. Ayúdanos a recibirte con alegría y acción de gracias. Infunde en cada uno de nosotros la mente de Cristo, para que podamos ser sus discípulos en esta tierra. En el nombre de Jesus.

### **Lectura biblica: Jeremías 2:1-9, 11-13**

**2** Vino a mí palabra de Jehová, diciendo: Anda y clama a los oídos de Jerusalén, diciendo: Así dice Jehová: Me he acordado de ti, de la fidelidad de tu juventud, del amor de tu desposorio, cuando andabas en pos de mí en el desierto, en tierra no sembrada.

<sup>3</sup> Santo era Israel a Jehová, primicias de sus nuevos frutos. Todos los que le devoraban eran culpables; mal venía sobre ellos, dice Jehová.

<sup>4</sup> Oíd la palabra de Jehová, casa de Jacob, y todas las familias de la casa de Israel.

<sup>5</sup> Así dijo Jehová: ¿Qué maldad hallaron en mí vuestros padres, que se alejaron de mí, y se fueron tras la vanidad y se hicieron vanos?

<sup>6</sup> Y no dijeron: ¿Dónde está Jehová, que nos hizo subir de la tierra de Egipto, que nos condujo por el desierto, por una tierra desierta y despoblada, por tierra seca y de sombra de muerte, por una tierra por la cual no pasó varón, ni allí habitó hombre?

<sup>7</sup> Y os introduje en tierra de abundancia, para que comieseis su fruto y su bien; pero entrasteis y contaminasteis mi tierra, e hicisteis abominable mi heredad.<sup>8</sup> Los sacerdotes no dijeron: ¿Dónde está Jehová? y los que tenían la ley no me conocieron; y los pastores se rebelaron contra mí, y los profetas profetizaron en nombre de Baal, y anduvieron tras lo que no aprovecha.

<sup>9</sup> Por tanto, contendereé aún con vosotros, dijo Jehová, y con los hijos de vuestros hijos pleitearé.<sup>11</sup> ¿Acaso alguna nación ha cambiado sus dioses, aunque ellos no son dioses? Sin embargo, mi pueblo ha trocado su gloria por lo que no aprovecha.

<sup>12</sup> Espantaos, cielos, sobre esto, y horrorizaos; desolaos en gran manera, dijo Jehová.<sup>13</sup> Porque dos males ha hecho mi pueblo: me dejaron a mí, fuente de agua viva, y cavaron para sí cisternas, cisternas rotas que no retienen agua.

## **SERMON: Cisternas Rotas, sin agua**

## **SERMON: Cracked Cisterns that Hold No Water**

## **BENDICION**

## **Blessing**



# GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

WEEKLY GUIDE SEPTEMBER 13 – 19, 2020

**Sermon** SEPTEMBER 13

**Faith for Tough Times**

Cracked Cisterns That Hold No Water

## Scripture References:

Jeremiah 2, selected verses and 10:22

*Things I'd like to remember from the sermon:*

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## PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, John wrote of you that "light came into the darkness, and the darkness could not overcome it." The prophet Jeremiah, on the other hand, preached many dark, gloomy messages to the people of Judah. He spent more time afflicting the comfortable than in comforting the afflicted. If I am too comfortable, help Jeremiah's message to wake me up. And when I need your comfort, help me find the hope that even this heartbroken prophet preached and lived. Amen.

## MONDAY Jeremiah 36:1-10

Jeremiah may give us more "behind the scenes" insight into the writing of Scripture than any other Bible book. At first, he spoke his messages. In today's passage, we read that, at God's direction, Jeremiah put his message in writing (Baruch, a skilled scribe, did the actual pen work). Baruch went beyond "scribing," and read God's word publicly in the Temple.

- "A time of fasting was proclaimed" (verse 9). Some responded to Jeremiah's message by seeking repentance. Most often in the Bible, fasting meant giving up food for a certain time. We can "fast" by giving up anything that draws our focus away from God (not just food) and using that time and energy to pray, read the Bible, worship, meditate, or serve. Choose a time this week to fast from something so as to draw nearer to God.
- When Jeremiah was restricted, he asked Baruch to read God's message aloud in the Temple for him. It is often hard for us to ask for help, even when we need it. In what areas of your life can you ask for help? What fears make it hard for you to seek help?

## TUESDAY Jeremiah 36:16-32

King Jehoiakim did not want to fast or repent. He contemptuously cut up Jeremiah's prophetic scroll and burned it. Then he sent officers to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch. Notice how verse 19, where temple officials tell Jeremiah to hide, interacts with verse 26—"the LORD had hidden them." We usually see God work through human instruments.

- Although he trusted that God was with him, surely Jeremiah was a little nervous about confronting the king who had just burned the Lord's prophecy. He even had an addition, a hard message directed specifically to the king (verses 29-31). How does knowing God is with you give you strength to face challenges in your life?
- The book of Jeremiah, as we have it, was collected and edited, likely after Jeremiah's death. "Many similar words were added to them" (verse 32) means we have, not just the scroll Baruch wrote, but other messages from Jeremiah. How did God work through faithful editors and copyists, as well as prophets and apostles, to bring us the Bible?

## WEDNESDAY Jeremiah 5:1-7, 26-31

When Jeremiah delivered stinging messages like this, people did not just say, "He's a prophet—it must be true." Verse 31 notes that there were many "prophets" in Jerusalem, and most of them said Jeremiah was wrong. This posed, and poses, an important question: how do we discern God's authentic voice, and decide how to respond to it?

- Jeremiah sharply rebuked Judah for following other gods, and for failing to defend "the just case of the poor." Do you see any linkage between the two issues—ways in which your choice of "gods" shapes the values by which you live your life? To what extent did Jesus follow Jeremiah's path in ministry? In what ways did Jesus do things differently?
- Jeremiah warned that Judah's turning from God meant they couldn't depend on God's protection from the Babylonians. His message was not what they wanted to hear. How open are you to honestly identifying and facing areas in which your values and actions are different from God's? How do you bring them into closer alignment?

## THURSDAY Jeremiah 28:1-17

Hananiah, a rival "prophet," swore that within two years Judah would be free from Babylon's power. He mocked Jeremiah's austere message. In this case, Jeremiah said the false prophet would die—and two months later, he did. Jeremiah did not give detail about how he would die, and we don't know. The stark fact spoke for itself: Jeremiah, not Hananiah, was right.

- In 2011, false prophets seldom bill themselves as “prophets.” Still, few of our choices of which way to live have a neon sign pointing to “God’s path.” A strong relationship with God, though, makes it easier to become attuned to God’s desires for our life. Choose one step you will take this week to make your relationship with God stronger.
- Other people have a great impact on the ways that we think, feel and respond to issues. Over the long term, it became clear that those who let Jeremiah influence them were much wiser than those who followed Hananiah. Who are the people who have the most influence over you? Are their lives and choices in tune with God’s values?

#### **FRIDAY**      **Jeremiah 20:1-2, 7-13**

God told Jeremiah he would make him like an iron pillar (1:18). But unlike an iron pillar, the prophet was still human, and had all the emotions each of us has. He didn’t like being hated; he didn’t like prophesying destruction. But he couldn’t stop preaching God’s message (verse 9). So he trusted God to be with him as he steadfastly carried out his heartbreaking ministry.

- God never promised his followers an easy ride through life. Few of us face the extreme physical threats Jeremiah (and many others, including Jesus) faced. But Jeremiah’s story can lead us all to ask: what is my faith worth? Rejection? Poverty? Physical danger? Have you worked through good answers to this question with God yet?
- Too often, we believe we should act as though nothing bothers us when we face tough times. Jeremiah, like the psalmists, penned several “laments” like this one. In what ways do you express pain or sadness? Are you able to share those concerns honestly with God? Is there someone in your life you can trust to share your feelings with?

#### **SATURDAY**      **Jeremiah 23:1-8**

Things were bad in Jeremiah’s Judah. The leaders were letting their people, and God, down. Jeremiah felt compelled to speak starkly about the wrongs he saw around him. But his vision did not get stuck solely on the flaws he saw in the present. God had a better future in store. Like all of the Biblical prophets, Jeremiah lived in the hope and trust that God would send a redeemer to set all things right (verse 6).

- It can be hard to hold onto hope in tough times. It’s difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel when you’re in exile (or unemployed, have lost someone close or been hurt by a loved one). What is the hardest thing you face right now? How have you learned to draw on God’s power, and the caring of others, to help you face fear and loss? In what ways do you build your faith that, in God’s world, the future always holds hope?

**Family Activity:** Ask another family to be prayer partners with your family. Find a time when your families can join together for conversation and a meal. After fun and fellowship, invite each person to share his or her joys and concerns aloud. (Offer pens and paper for those who would rather write their prayer requests.) Discuss how and when your families would like pray. Would each person like to pray for another person? Does one family want to pray for the other family as a whole? How will you keep in touch through the week and when will you meet again? Make sure to celebrate answered requests and be persistent in ongoing requests each time your families are together. Pray for those outside your families as well.

## **LIFTING UP OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN PRAYER**

### **Prayers of Praise:**

### **Prayers for Health & Healing:**

Church family undergoing long-term

### **Prayers for Comfort:**

### **Prayers for**



## CHILDREN'S SERMON: A Clean Slate

### Theme

Jesus erases our mistakes and gives us a clean start.

### Object

A whiteboard, a dry erase marker, and some whiteboard cleaner.

### Scripture

"'Although you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me,' declares the Sovereign Lord" (Jeremiah 2:22). "Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalms 51:7).

This morning I have brought a whiteboard with me. I suppose that some day the whiteboard will totally replace the old-fashioned chalkboards that we still see in many of our schools. One of the nice things about the whiteboards is that you can use different colored markers to make your message stand out and make it more interesting. If you are writing with a black marker and want to make a word stand out from the others, you can switch to red. Of course, if you make a mistake, you can just wipe it off and start over again.

One thing I have noticed about the whiteboards is that as you use it day after day, you begin to see stains left on the board. You can wash it with soap and water, but the stains won't come out. That is why someone invented this special whiteboard cleaner. Just spray it on and wipe it with a cloth and the stains of the old marks are gone and your board is as white as new.

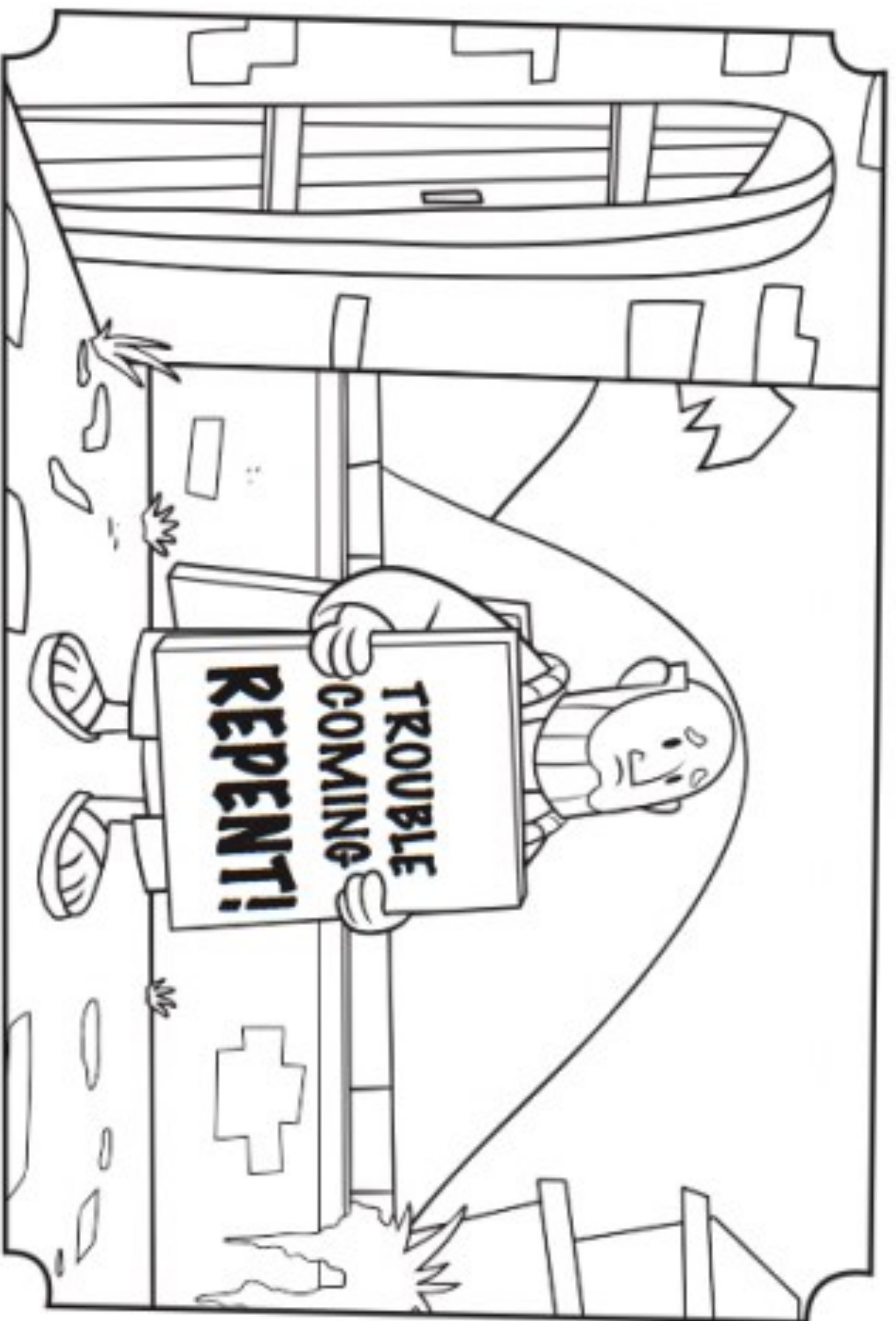
We are about to begin new year. It is time to erase the mistakes of the past year and begin again with a clean slate. Some of the mistakes we have made are more than simply making a wrong decision. There are some things that we have done that God has told us in the Bible not to do. We call that sin. Some of those sins we have done time and time again and they have left a stain upon our lives which we cannot erase.

In the Bible God said, "Even though you wash yourself with a lot of soap, the stain of your guilt is still there." We must have God's forgiveness to take away those stains -- and we can have God's forgiveness because of Jesus. Jesus is like this special whiteboard cleaner. If we turn to Jesus and ask him to forgive us of our sins, he will wash away our sin and we will be as white as snow. Then we can truly start the new year with a clean slate!

Dear Lord, we are thankful that as we start this new year, we can truly start with a clean slate as we ask you for forgiveness in Jesus' name. Amen.

**"Hard Places" Craft (15 minutes)** Reiterate to the class that even though Jeremiah was obedient to God, he experienced some hard things (such as being taken to Egypt and having to share bad news with God's people). Comment, "We've all experienced some hard, heart-breaking, and frustrating things because we are God's children. So, we're going to make a craft to remind us that the Lord is greater than anything bad we could ever experience." Give each child at least three stones and ask them to carefully write the name of something that has challenged their faith on each stone (e.g. sadness, loss, death, insecurity). Then give each child a plastic favor bag and help them write, "GOD IS GREATER!" on the bag. Help the class understand that placing the stones inside the bags (and sealing the bags with a tie or knot) symbolize our trust in God to take care of even the deepest hurts. Say, "The Lord knows we have these 'heavy' stones in our hearts! But he asks us to trust him anyway and make the choice to serve him, like Jeremiah did, even when things are hard."





The prophet Jeremiah tried to warn the people of Judah for 40 years that trouble was coming, but they chose to listen to false prophets instead.

# TOUGH FAITH FOR HARD TIMES

**Never Too Far Gone: Return, O Israel / Nunca te has ido demasiado lejos**

**WESTLAWN UMC**

**122 S. SAN MANUEL, SAN ANTONIO TX**

**PASTOR LILIANA PADILLA**

**CELL 325-315-8735**

**SEPTIEMBRE 23, 2020**

## **Welcome / Pray**

Teach Us Your Ways

Here's a call to worship inspired by Psalm 122 and  
Isaiah 2:1-5.

I was overjoyed when they said to me, "Let us go to  
the house of the Lord!"

In faith, we gather to worship you, O God.

This is where you teach us your ways, that we may  
walk in your paths.

This is where we hear and act upon your word of  
peace and justice.

so that instruments of war are transformed into tools  
of production;

and nation shall not lift up arms against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.

As we hear and obey, we shall surely walk in the light  
of the Lord!

## **WORSHIP TIME**

### **CHILDREN'S TIME**

### **OFFERING**

*<sup>7</sup> Each of you should give what you have decided in  
your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compul-  
sion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

*2 Corinthians 9:7*

## **Oracion Inicial.**

Enséñanos tus caminos

Aquí hay un llamado a la adoración inspirado en el  
Salmo 122 e Isaías 2: 1-5.

Me llené de alegría cuando me dijeron: "¡Vamos a la  
casa del Señor!"

En fe, nos reunimos para adorarte, oh Dios.

Aquí es donde nos enseñas tus caminos, para que  
podamos caminar en tus caminos.

Aquí es donde escuchamos y actuamos sobre su pa-  
labra de paz y justicia.

Para que los instrumentos de guerra se transformen  
en herramientas de producción; y nación no levanta-  
rá armas contra nación, ni aprenderán más la gue-  
rra.

¡Mientras escuchamos y obedecemos, seguramente  
caminaremos a la luz del Señor !

## **TIEMPO DE ALABANDA**

### **TIEMPO PARA LOS NIÑOS**

### **OFRENDA:**

Cada uno de como propuso en su Corazon  
no con tristeza o por necesidad porque  
Dios ama al dador alegre.

*2 Corintios 9:7*

## Ways You Can Send Us Your Offerings

- [Www.myiglesiawestlawn.org](http://www.myiglesiawestlawn.org)
  - By email: Rene de la Cruz
- 9446 Hindi Drive, San Antonio TX 78224

***Prayer for illumination:** Loving God, enter into our hearts. Help us to receive you with joy and thanksgiving. Instill in each of us the mind of Christ, that we may be your disciples on this earth. In Jesús name Amen.*

### **Bible Reading: Jeremiah 3:12-13, 7:5-7**

<sup>12</sup> Go, proclaim this message toward the north:

“Return, faithless Israel,” declares the LORD,

‘I will frown on you no longer, for I am faithful,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will not be angry forever.’

<sup>13</sup> Only acknowledge your guilt—you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,” declares the LORD.

<sup>7:5</sup> If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, <sup>6</sup> if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, <sup>7</sup> then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever.

### **SERMON:**

**Never Too FarGone: Return,Oh Israel**

### **Blessing**

\*Formas en que usted puede hacernos llegar sus ofrendas.

-A traves de la pagina: [www.myiglesiawestlawn.org](http://www.myiglesiawestlawn.org)

-Por correo regular al hermano Rene de La Cruz

Cheque a nombre de la Iglesia Westlawnd

9446 Hindi Drive, San Antonio TX 78224

**Oración por la iluminación:** Amado Dios, entra en nuestros corazones. Ayúdanos a recibirte con alegría y acción de gracias. Infunde en cada uno de nosotros la mente de Cristo, para que podamos ser sus discípulos en esta tierra.  
En el nombre de Jesus.

### **Lectura biblica: Jeremías 3:12-13, 7:5-7**

<sup>12</sup> Ve y clama estas palabras hacia el norte, y di: Vuélvete, oh rebelde Israel, dice Jehová; no haré caer mi ira sobre ti, porque misericordioso soy yo, dice Jehová, no guardaré para siempre el enojo.

<sup>13</sup> Reconoce, pues, tu maldad, porque contra Jehová tu Dios has prevaricado, y fornicaste con los extraños debajo de todo árbol frondoso, y no oíste mi voz, dice Jehová.

<sup>7:5</sup> Pero si mejorareis cumplidamente vuestros caminos y vuestras obras; si con verdad hicieréis justicia entre el hombre y su prójimo,

<sup>6</sup> y no oprimiereis al extranjero, al huérfano y a la viuda, ni en este lugar derramareis la sangre inocente, ni anduviereis en pos de dioses ajenos para mal vuestro,

<sup>7</sup> os haré morar en este lugar, en la tierra que di a vuestros padres para siempre.

### **SERMON:**

**Nunca te has ido demasiado lejos:**

**Regresa Israel**

### **BENDICION**



# GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

WEEKLY GUIDE SEPTEMBER 20—26, 2020

## Sermon

### Jeremiah: A Faith for Tough Times

Never Too Far Gone: Return, O Israel -

## Scripture References:

Jeremiah 3:12-13 7:5-7

Things I'd like to remember from the sermon:

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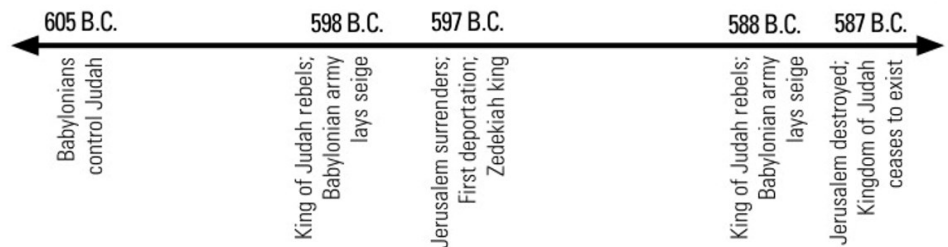
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## PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God, your people didn't seem to "get it." No matter what Jeremiah preached, they refused to cooperate with you to create an inner life that reflected your love, your joy, and your peace. Help me to be wiser than they were. Help me trust that you have my best interests at heart, even if you challenge me or call me to change. I want to want what you want, Lord. Make this true for me. Amen.



## MONDAY Jeremiah 8:18 – 9:1

In their *Old Testament Survey*, the scholars LaSor, Hubbard and Bush wrote that "Jeremiah's agony mirrors the agony of Yahweh at his rejection by Judah." Neither Jeremiah nor God *wanted* to see Babylon crush Judah. Even the strongest words of judgment came from a heart that wept over Israel's stubborn refusal to repent.

- In Romans 9:2-3, Paul spoke like Jeremiah: "I have great sorrow... in my heart... I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people... the people of Israel." How did Jeremiah and Paul develop God's compassion toward those who opposed them, rather than scorn or hatred? How can you grow more like them?
- Gilead was famous for plants that were made into medicinal salves and balms (see Genesis 37:25). Hence Jeremiah's expression "balm in Gilead" (not "bomb" in Gilead, though people sometimes hear it that way!). In what ways has God's presence been a healing balm in your life? In what areas do you wish for God's healing touch?

## TUESDAY Jeremiah 3:22-4:4

Twice in these verses Jeremiah repeated God's call to his wayward people: "Return." God was not calling them, and does not call us, to abstract ethics, rigid rules to obey "or else." God called them, and us, to a relationship, a decision to walk daily with God. If Israel would return to the relationship, God said, he would provide the spiritual healing they needed.

- What differences do you see between calling people to "return to correct doctrine" or "return to good actions" and the call God in fact sent through Jeremiah: "return to *me*" (4:1)? To what extent has God become a personal presence in your life, rather than just an idea? What steps help open you to a more personal connection with God?
- Verses 23-25 record a kind of divine "wishful thinking," the words God (and Jeremiah) wished Judah's people would say. What things today are like the deceptive "idolrous commotion on the hills" in Jeremiah's time? When have you let something go in order to return to God? What did it take to show you that you needed to change course?

## WEDNESDAY Jeremiah 26:1-13

Jeremiah used a key idea twice in this Temple sermon: "The Lord will relent." At another spot in the book (which, remember, is a collection, not in chronological order), we read God saying, "I have spoken and will not relent" (Jeremiah 4:28). But in the Temple, Jeremiah said, "If you change your behavior, God *will* relent and spare you from disaster."

- In the book of Jonah, God sent another prophet to preach disaster. The hearers repented and God relented. That made Jonah furious: "Isn't this what I said, LORD?... I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God... who relents from sending disaster" (Jonah 4:2). Was Jeremiah right—could Israel have avoided exile by truly turning back to God? Or do you believe God is unable to shape how empires like Babylon act?
- At one time, God's tabernacle was in Shiloh (see Joshua 18:1). By Jeremiah's day, Shiloh lay in



ruins (Jeremiah 7:12-15). God blessed the Methodist church, and Resurrection, in the past. Does that mean God must protect us today, whatever our spiritual condition?

#### **THURSDAY**      **Jeremiah 18:1-12**

Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house led him to teach the principle scholars call "conditional prophecy." Many in his day said, "God *can't* allow us to face judgment—he promised to look after Israel." To them, the message was, "If you leave God, God's shelter may leave you." But it also gave hope to those who felt, "It's no use—we're doomed." To them, Jeremiah said, "Prophecy is not destiny, but warning. If you repent, God will forgive and protect."

- Prophecy doesn't bind either God or us. We can always choose to change course (for good or for ill), and God is free to respond to our choices. When have you chosen to go against what God asks of you? If it brought bad results, what did you learn? Could you (or can you) see past your failure and ask God to help you live in God's way?
- Sadly, verse 12 said Judah's people responded to God's call by saying "It's no use" and continuing on their doomed course. Is there any part of your life that makes you feel as though "it's no use?" How can what Jeremiah taught about God give you hope?

#### **FRIDAY**      **Jeremiah 3:12-20**

Jeremiah mixed images of God as scorned husband and parent to call to Judah. Commentator John Guest noted, "The divorce laws [of Jeremiah's day] said there was no second chance. Yet God's love transcends our frailties and offers us a new marriage with Him." We can "see" Jeremiah pleading, "'Return!' [says God]. 'How gladly I would treat you like my children.'"

- Jeremiah echoed God's message to Moses: "The LORD...the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished" (Exodus 34:6-7). How have you experienced God's grace and compassion, God's eagerness to forgive you and welcome you back when you miss the mark?
- Do you tend to think of God having feelings, or as dispassionate? Ephesians 4:30 urged Christians, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." Reflect on how your lack of trust or defiant acts might grieve God. How can you take steps to avoid bringing God grief?

#### **SATURDAY**      **Jeremiah 4:6-14**

God never gives up. It's harder to see in the English Bible, but Jeremiah was a gifted Hebrew poet. He used a series of vivid poetic images in chapter 4 to warn Israel of the looming danger the nation faced. The Babylonian lion was out of his lair; his chariots were coming like a whirlwind. But those grim images were not a simple forecast; they were the backdrop for an appeal. The prophet/poet ended with "Wash the evil from your heart and be saved."

- "Wash the evil from your heart" might sound as if we just need to think differently. The *UBS Translator's Handbook on Jeremiah* notes that the Hebrew phrase is about how our inner thoughts shape our way of life: "Translators can say 'clean all the evil from your lives' or 'make your hearts [or, lives] clean; remove all the evil.'" How are you, day by day, giving God access to your thoughts, so that through them God can be at work to reshape your way of life?

**Family Activity:** Jeremiah told people to turn to God and away from their sin. Ask each person in your family to individually pray (aloud or silently, whichever works better), "Lord, I am sorry for..." and confess his or her sins to God. Have each one write a word or draw a simple picture on paper representing something about his or her sin. Attach the papers to a shared wall. Stand together facing the papers and say, "God, we turn away from our sin, and we turn toward you." Turn your bodies away from the wall and toward a symbol reminding you of God (cross, Bible, nature, etc.) End your time together by praying, "Thank you, God, for the promise of your forgiveness. Amen."

## **LIFTING UP OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN PRAYER**

### **Prayers of Praise:**

### **Prayers for Health & Healing:**

Church family undergoing long-term medical

### **Prayers for Comfort:**

### **Prayers for the Military:**

## CHILDREN'S SERMON: God shapes us into what he wants us to be.

### Object

Balloons for making animals. (I was fortunate to have a professional clown in my church. I had her make some really neat balloon animals before I did my part. This sermon could also be done using clay or play dough.)

### Scripture

Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand. Jeremiah 18:6

How many of you have ever seen someone who could take balloons and shape them into different kinds of animals? I was watching Sassy the clown do that the other day and I thought, "I'll bet I can do that." I think I'll try it. (Take out a balloon and blow it up, then go through some gyrations as if you were trying to make it into the shape of an animal.) Oh look, I've made a snake. That is pretty good, isn't it! I think I'll try another one. (Blow up another balloon and go through the same process again.) Hey, look, I've made a worm. Well, maybe this isn't as easy as I thought it was going to be. Maybe Sassy the clown knew a lot more about it than I do.

This reminds me of the way God works in my life. If I will let Him, God can take my life and shape it into whatever He wants me to be. But every time I try to do it myself, I turn out to be a snake or a worm. What I need to do is just put myself in God's hands and let Him shape me into what He wants me to be.

Dear Lord, every time I try to take control of my life, I wind up as a snake or a worm. Help me to let you to make me into what you want me to be. Amen.

C	W	H	N	S	H	Z	W	S	A	V	E	D	U	E
M	O	F	O	S	N	P	I	K	G	V	P	A	B	R
Q	K	M	T	H	V	Y	O	S	C	Y	O	W	T	E
K	F	J	E	K	G	V	B	T	A	A	B	V	B	U
P	X	T	F	H	G	S	N	P	T	I	L	E	C	F
X	X	F	D	I	A	I	A	L	L	E	A	L	C	D
B	S	E	O	D	O	E	M	P	C	J	R	H	S	K
C	M	L	W	D	Y	W	E	N	U	Y	F	D	W	Z
N	Z	O	N	E	N	Q	O	A	R	D	S	A	Y	M
G	H	R	V	N	E	H	T	G	R	C	O	G	C	R
X	B	D	C	L	A	Y	N	K	N	V	B	N	W	E
I	H	Y	M	A	T	A	L	V	S	Q	I	G	O	H
H	A	N	D	S	M	B	Z	N	P	S	I	P	R	X
F	R	E	L	X	R	F	N	J	O	A	A	I	K	L
G	W	T	U	S	H	H	X	M	V	A	W	J	F	J

In the Potter's Hands

Word Search

### In the Potter's Hand

Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Isaiah 64:8  
The puzzle is based on Psalm 100



CLAY	POTTER	NAME	CALLS	WORK
SIN	LORD	DOWN	FACE	SAVED
ANGRY	HIDDEN	HAND	COME	ISAIAH



I have

LOVED

You

with an

EVERLASTING

Love

- JEREMIAH 31:3

# TOUGH FAITH FOR HARD TIMES

**Hope for the Hopeless /**

**Esperanza para quienes no tienen esperanza**

**WESTLAWN UMC**

**122 S. SAN MANUEL, SAN ANTONIO TX**

**PASTOR LILIANA PADILLA**

**CELL 325-315-8735**

**SEPTIEMBRE 30, 2020**

**Welcome / Pray**

Call to Worship

(inspired by Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7)

A word of encouragement came from prophet to  
people;

Live a life that is full – build, plant, eat, love, multiply-

Pray for your communities

Keep God in the center of all that is.

We enter into worship today with hope in our hearts

For something happens here

that reminds us that we can live as God desires

God has made a promise of faithfulness to us

and we can trust the promise.

**WORSHIP TIME**

**CHILDREN'S TIME**

**OFFERING**

*<sup>7</sup> Each of you should give what you have decided in  
your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compul-  
sion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

*2 Corinthians 9:7*

**Oración Inicial.**

Llamado a la adoración

(inspirado en Jeremías 29: 1, 4-7)

Una palabra de aliento vino del profeta a la gente;  
Vive una vida plena: construye, planta, come, ama,  
multiplica ...

Oren por sus comunidades

Manten a Dios en el centro de todo lo que eres.

Entramos en la adoración hoy con esperanza en  
nuestros corazones

Porque algo pasa aquí  
que nos recuerda que podemos vivir como Dios  
desea

Dios nos ha hecho una promesa de fidelidad  
y podemos confiar en la promesa.

**TIEMPO DE ALABANDA**

**TIEMPO PARA LOS NINOS**

**OFRENDA:**

Cada uno de como propuso en su Corazon  
no con tristeza o por necesidad porque  
Dios ama al dador alegre.

2 Corintios 9:7



## Ways You Can Send Us Your Offerings

- [Www.myiglesiawestlawn.org](http://www.myiglesiawestlawn.org)

- By email: Rene de la Cruz

9446 Hindi Drive, San Antonio TX 78224

***Prayer for illumination:** Loving God, enter into our hearts. Help us to receive you with joy and thanksgiving. Instill in each of us the mind of Christ, that we may be your disciples on this earth. In Jesús name Amen.*

### **Bible Reading: Jeremiah 29:1, 11-14**

**29:1** This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon

**11** For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. **12** Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. **13** You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. **14** I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity.

[b] I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

## **SERMON: Hope for the Hopeless**

### **Blessing**

**\*Formas en que usted puede hacernos llegar sus ofrendas.**

-A través de la página: [www.myiglesiawestlawn.org](http://www.myiglesiawestlawn.org)

-Por correo regular al hermano Rene de La Cruz

Cheque a nombre de la Iglesia Westlawnd

9446 Hindi Drive, San Antonio TX 78224

**Oración por la iluminación:** Amado Dios, entra en nuestros corazones. Ayúdanos a recibirte con alegría y acción de gracias. Infunde en cada uno de nosotros la mente de Cristo, para que podamos ser sus discípulos en esta tierra.  
En el nombre de Jesús.

### **Lectura bíblica: Jeremías 29:1, 11-14**

**29** Estas son las palabras de la carta que el profeta Jeremías envió de Jerusalén a los ancianos que habían quedado de los que fueron transportados, y a los sacerdotes y profetas y a todo el pueblo que Nabucodonosor llevó cautivo de Jerusalén a Babilonia

**11** Porque yo sé los pensamientos que tengo acerca de vosotros, dice Jehová, pensamientos de paz, y no de mal, para daros el fin que esperáis. **12** Entonces me invocaréis, y vendréis y oraréis a mí, y yo os oiré; **13** y me buscaréis y me hallaréis, porque me buscaréis de todo vuestro corazón.

**14** Y seré hallado por vosotros, dice Jehová, y haré volver vuestra cautividad, y os reuniré de todas las naciones y de todos los lugares adonde os arrojé, dice Jehová; y os haré volver al lugar de donde os hice llevar.

## **SERMON: Esperanza para los que no tienen esperanza!**

### **BENDICION**



grow. pray. study.

“Prisoners of Hope”

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Jeremiah 29:11, Zechariah 9:12

**A need for hope: Judah's decline and exile**

As we turn to prophetic words of hope, we first review the tragic events that made hope so necessary. The little kingdom of Judah lost its way spiritually after their last good king, Josiah, died fighting an Egyptian incursion (cf. [2 Kings 23:28-29](#)). As they ignored their covenant with God, first Egypt and then Babylon put puppet kings on the throne and warned against any rebellion. 2 Kings 25 tells of the final disaster in 586 B.C. Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, carried thousands of its people away, and “Judah was exiled from its land.”

- This is hard to read. But disaster did not come “out of the blue.” The prophet Jeremiah had warned that even the beautiful Temple Solomon built was no guarantee that God would keep protecting those who ignored God’s calls for justice and faithfulness (cf. [Jeremiah 7:1-10](#)). How can the tragedy of Judah’s descent into exile speak to you when there is tension between God’s ways and the pressures and demands of the human culture around you?
- “*Judah was exiled from its land*: A final tragic declaration by the historian leaves the reader wondering whether there might be any hope for Judah.” \* Right then, it looked as though God’s big promise to Abraham—“I will make of you a great nation and will bless you” (Genesis 12:2)—had failed. Imagine how you’d have felt as a citizen of Judah being marched into exile and keep those feelings in mind as we read the prophetic messages this week.

**Prayer:** O God, your great heart must have wept as your children wandered away from you and into disaster. And yet, even as many of them must have felt like giving up, we know you never did, and I thank you for that. Amen.

\* Gordon Matties, study note on 2 Kings 25:21 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 616OT.

**Hope—after a long exile**

**TUESDAY      Jeremiah 29:1-14**

This section of Jeremiah backed up a bit. Babylon first took Hebrew exiles away in 597 B.C. while leaving the puppet King Zedekiah in Jerusalem. Jeremiah sent a letter to those exiles urging them to settle down for a lengthy stay in Babylon. That message was not popular. Self-proclaimed prophets like Hananiah and Shemaiah thought the exile would end quickly. Shemaiah wrote from Babylon asking the high priest in Jerusalem to imprison Jeremiah (cf. [Jeremiah 28:1-3, 29:24-32](#)).

- Jeremiah told the exiles God had “plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope.” But first he said, “When Babylon’s seventy years \* are up.” Jeremiah’s words presuppose that there’s no quick fix for the community’s situation. This doesn’t mean the situation is hopeless. It does mean people

need to be prepared to take the long view." \*\* Could anything requiring "the long view" actually give you hope? What makes trusting patience essential as you walk with God?

- Verse 13 summed up Jeremiah's message of judgment and hope: "When you search for me, yes, search for me with all your heart, you will find me." How do you understand the meaning of searching for God "with all your heart"? What times or events in your life have driven you to seek God with all your heart? What steps helped you do that?

**Prayer:** Loving God, with all my heart I want to be a part of your hope-filled future. It's often hard for me to wait, so keep teaching me to trust your timing more than my restless demands. Amen.

\* "seventy years, i.e., a long time or a lifetime; see Jeremiah 25:11." Louis Stulman, study note on Jeremiah 29:4-14 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 1255OT.

\*\* John Goldingay, *Jeremiah for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015, p. 146.

## **A new covenant after exile's lessons are learned**

### **WEDNESDAY                      Jeremiah 31:10-14, 17, 31-34**

As in yesterday's reading, Jeremiah's message was one of hope: "The LORD will rescue the people of Jacob... They will come shouting for joy on the hills of Zion." But it was long-term hope, not immediate: "Your children will return home!" And the key was for the people to choose a new covenant with God. This covenant would engrave God's instructions on their hearts as they understood God's profound desire to forgive and restore them.

- Jeremiah had voiced shock on God's behalf at the people's choice to worship the pagan non-gods rather than their covenant God: "Has a nation switched gods, though they aren't really gods at all? Yet my people have exchanged their glory for what has no value" (Jeremiah 2:11). How would that change? "God intends to pardon the people's waywardness and restore them to their country. Maybe that has the power to change them." \* When have you experienced the transforming power of God's forgiveness?
- Jesus' followers saw in Jeremiah's new covenant words a picture of Jesus' mercy and forgiveness ([Luke 22:20](#), [1 Corinthians 11:25](#), [2 Corinthians 3:5-14](#), [Hebrews 8:8-12](#), [9:15](#), [10:16-17](#)). But Jeremiah's original promise was to "the people of Israel and Judah." "Christians enjoy a wondrous relationship with God through Jesus Christ, but their participation in the new covenant in no way excludes the initial recipients and their heirs." \*\* How might the new covenant promise help bridge centuries of fear and distrust between Christians and Jews, rather than widening it?

**Prayer:** Lord God, you are "the God who stays." \*\*\* Thank you for drawing me into the company of all who respond to your love and live in the grace and beauty of your new covenant. Amen.

\* John Goldingay, *Jeremiah for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015, p. 160.

\*\* Louis Stulman, sidebar "The New Covenant" in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 1261OT.

\*\*\* Writer(s): Matthew West, Jonathan Smith, Andrew Pruis. Song lyrics from

<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/matthewwest/thegodwhostays.html>.

## **Hope from a vision of God's life-giving breath**

### **THURSDAY                      Ezekiel 37:1-14**

Babylon exiled the prophet Ezekiel along with many other Israelites in 597 BC. Twelve years later a survivor from Jerusalem's destruction in 586 gave Ezekiel the news that the city had fallen, with even the Temple destroyed. That news must have deepened the exiles' sense of hopelessness. But Ezekiel had a series of visions of hope. The most vivid of those visions is today's reading—the famous vision of God bringing a valley of dried out bones back to life.



- Genesis showed two steps in creating life: “the LORD God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life’s breath into his nostrils” (Genesis 2:7). And in vision Ezekiel saw the bones covered with skin but not yet alive. “When the breath entered them, they came to life” (verse 10). “*rûah* in the Hebrew original, has three meanings in English....They are ‘breath,’ ‘wind,’ and ‘spirit.’” \* Verse 14 told the hopeless Hebrew exiles that God’s spirit would bring them back alive as a people. How central is God’s spirit in giving you, and our entire congregation, true spiritual life?
- Ezekiel’s dramatic, visionary image delivered the message that God offers hope even when we can see none. When have you seen God take a “dry bones” person, relationship or situation that seemed beyond hope and bring new life to it? With whom can you share the good news of God’s life-giving hope?

**Prayer:** “Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew.” \*\* I need your Spirit filling me each day, Lord Jesus, and I open myself to it again today. Amen.

\* Douglas Stuart, *The Preacher’s Commentary Series, Volume 20: Ezekiel*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1989, p. 335.

\*\* Edwin Hatch wrote this hymn in 1878, and it is now printed in 295 different hymnals, according to

[https://hymnary.org/text/breathe\\_on\\_me\\_breath\\_of\\_god](https://hymnary.org/text/breathe_on_me_breath_of_god).

## Hope for those returning from exile

### FRIDAY      Isaiah 40:27-31

Today’s readings likely came from a time when the Israelites were returning to their ruined land (or about to return) after decades in exile. There were no “Babylon to Jerusalem” flights—words like “stumble” and “walk” reflected the only way most exiles got home. The walking exiles were weary and feared that God was too. But Isaiah said God “doesn’t grow tired or weary.” Israel (and we) could always trust in God, because God-given hope (not hope in our own power) renews our strength.

- Can you recall times when you have felt like the Israelites in Isaiah 40:27: “My way is hidden from the LORD, my God ignores my predicament”? Are there areas of your life that feel that way to you right now as we all deal with the conditions created by the Covid-19 outbreak? In what ways can you reconnect with the Creator who “doesn’t grow tired or weary” of caring for you?
- Isaiah wrote, “His understanding is beyond human reach” (verse 28). Our need to control, our challenge with “letting go,” inevitably runs into our inability to control time and disease. Even the best health and fitness programs cannot (honestly) promise to fully halt aging or infection. How can really trusting in a God who’s vastly wiser than you are renew your strength by setting you free from the need to try to control life’s uncontrollable realities?

**Prayer:** Lord God, full of eternal energy, you remain the same creative, caring God you’ve always been. Help me learn more and more to trust your timeless love. Amen.

## “Prisoners of hope” in hardships after exile

### SATURDAY      Zechariah 9:9-12

Zechariah preached soon after Israel’s return from exile (see [Ezra 5:1, 6:14](#)). There were many challenges in rebuilding the city the Babylonians had sacked, but this prophet called on people to rejoice because God was with them (cf. [Zechariah 2:10-12](#)). He returned to the call to rejoice at the start of today’s reading. One result of God’s presence (at the end of the exile, and more broadly when the promised deliverer, the Messiah came) was that prisoners were set free. That promised freedom (spiritual more than just physical) was why Zechariah called them “prisoners of hope.” (Four weeks ago on Palm Sunday, we remembered that Jesus so clearly drew on Zechariah’s word picture that both [Matthew 21:4-7](#) and [John 12:14-15](#) quoted verse 9 in the story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem.)



- Imagine yourself as an Israelite who had come back from exile in Babylon just a few weeks or months before hearing these words. How did Zechariah encourage his contemporaries? How would this message have lifted their spirits and given them strength to move ahead with the tasks of rebuilding? Now imagine that you were one of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. How does knowing Jesus and seeing him set many different people free from prisons of their own or others' making deepen your insight into Zechariah's phrase "prisoners of hope"? Now imagine yourself as someone dealing with the consequences of a wide-spread shutdown due to a deadly contagious virus. (Oops—no imagination needed.) In what way(s) can your trust in the God Zechariah served empower you, too, to live as a prisoner of hope?

**Prayer:** Lord, you know the times right now when I feel cooped up, constrained, unable to do some of what I want to do. By your presence with me, help me to rejoice greatly even now, to be not just a prisoner, but a prisoner of hope. Amen.

## CHILDREN SERMON: The "Rasslin' Match"

Theme: Surrender to God's will.

Object: A picture of your father

Scripture: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

This is a picture of my dad. My dad is in Heaven with Jesus now, but I still think about him a lot and remember some of the good times we used to have together. One thing I remember is how we used to have "rasslin' matches" when I was a little boy. We'd get down on the floor and wrestle. He'd take my arm and put it behind my back and he'd say, "Do you give up?" I'd say, "No!" He would keep holding my arm behind my back until I'd say, "I give up! I give up!" He would let me up, and I would jump right back on him and the "rasslin' match" would start all over again. Of course, my dad was much larger and stronger than I was and he could have easily won every "rasslin' match," but he didn't. He would often let me win.

We often get into a "rasslin' match" with our Heavenly Father. We want to do things our way, and he wants us to "give up" and let Him be in control of our life. The things that He wants for us are much better than the things we want for ourselves. In the Bible God says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

God, our heavenly Father is strong and mighty. He could easily force us to do what He wants us to do, but He doesn't do that. He patiently waits for us to "give up" and give Him control. Isn't it time we said, "I give up! I give up!" and let Him have control of our life?

Dear Father, we choose You to be the Lord of our life. We "give up." You are in control. Amen.

# Hope for the Hopeless

## Group Activities

### "Hope for the Hopeless"

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 29:11

#### **TURN,TURN,TURN:**

Children can stand in a long line or they can scatter around a designated area or stand in a circle, as teacher desires. The teacher can tell the children to TURN to the RIGHT or TURN to the LEFT, or TURN toward the MIDDLE of the room, or TURN toward the teacher or the window, or the door, etc. The teacher can have a very LARGE lettered J-E-S-U-S on one wall and from time to time the teacher can say to TURN to JESUS. Play as time allows and let children hear today's Bible story after sharing our THEME and today's Bible verse.

#### **CLEAN MACHINE:**

Divide the class into two teams. One team can be given washable markers to put dots of marker on the other team members' arms or faces, if desired. The team with the dots will then be given wet toweling or wipes to wipe off the dots. Let children know about today's Bible lesson and the leprosy that was the dreaded disease in Jesus' time. Then switch markers to the other team and continue the same way as the first team.

#### **BANDAID MAN:**

Give children supplies to cut out part of a person and glue or tape to a piece of construction paper. The teacher will come to each child's paper and put a mark on a couple of places on the body and then give the children 2 bandaids to place on those marks. Tell children to write HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS on the shirt of their paper person and talk about today's lesson with leprosy and Jesus healing the man who had hope and trust in Jesus.

#### **FINGER PAINTING HOPE:**

Children can be given paper and paint to do a finger painting project. After children have played with the paints and made designs on their paper with the paint, encourage the children to use their finger and write HOPE on the artwork and let it dry throughout the class time.

#### **BIG LETTER HUNT:**

Before classtime, the teacher/leaders can make large construction paper letters (one letter for each piece of construction paper) to hide around a designated area. There should be a large letter for every letter of HOPE and TRUST. Children can HUNT for the letters and bring them back to tape to the classroom door or a special wall or poster board! Tell children to ask each other questions about today's lesson.

#### **SING A SONG:**

MY GOD IS SO GREAT; JESUS LOVES THE LITTLE CHILDREN

#### **SHARE A SNACK:**

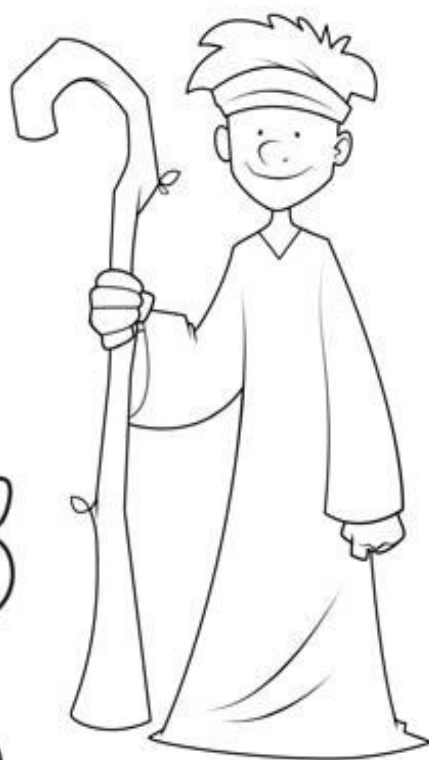
Each child could be given a snack pack of nuts, raisins, pretzels, crackers, juice box, etc, to show children what many organizations give to the homeless and people who need encouragement when they are hurting and need someone's help.

GOD

knows

His plan

for each  
of us.



**Jeremiah 29:11**





**“Porque yo sé los planes que tengo para vosotros” --declara el SEÑOR-- “planes de bienestar y no de calamidad, para daros un futuro y una esperanza.**

**Jeremías 29:11**

Damos gracias a Dios siempre, por cada uno de ustedes.

Oramos constantemente por que El Señor los cuide y mantenga en Salud.

Las cosas han cambiado tanto, nuestra vida, la vida de la Iglesia, el mundo entero ha cambiado. Pero Nuestro Dios no cambia el sigue siendo el mismo, su amor y presencia continua nuestro lado, y aunque las montañas se muevan, Nuestro Dios es fiel y su poder y gracia nos rodean cada día.

Nuestro mundo está enfrentando retos nuevos, dolor, perdida, enfermedad, necesidades económicas, y violencia, y al igual que en los tiempos de Jeremías, a pesar del toda esta crisis, pareciera que el mundo no quiere oír la voz de Dios,

El mensaje de Jeremías toma un nuevo entendimiento para nuestras vidas ahora que nos sentimos tan vulnerables, Dios sigue llamándonos a buscarlo, a clamar a El, El nos sigue diciendo que está aquí para nosotros. El nos llama a regresar a EL.

Te invito a que sigas conectado con nosotros, aprenderemos del Mensaje del Profeta Jeremías y el llamado a mantener la esperanza y la fe que se requiere para estos tiempos difíciles.

#### **MINISTERIOS DE NUESTRA IGLESIA:**

**LAVANDERIA GRATUITA (NECESITAS HACER CITA 325-315-8735)**

**MIERCOLES: ENTREGA DE PLATILLOS DE COMIDA (LLAMA 325-315-8735 PARA APARTAR EL TUYO)**

**SABADOS: ENTREGA DE DESPENSA 10:00 AM**

**SI DESEAS CONCETARTE CON NUESTRAS PUBLICACIONES:**

**FACEBOOK Y YOUTUBE ENVIA UN TEXTO AL 325-315-8735 PARA ENVIARTE EL LINK**