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**SERMON TITLE: Waking Up to the Power of God**  
*The Life & Times of Jeremiah*  
**SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 1:11-19**  
**DATE: October 13, 2019**  
*Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

*Read also 2 Corinthians 13:2-9.*

*Paul* was speaking for God to the church at Corinth. Did you notice his last sentence?

*We pray that you will become mature.*

That is God's goal for believers. That's a logical goal—you want your children to become educated, productive, civilized members of society. We want them to be all they can be. God wants the same for us regarding spiritual maturity.

When Jeremiah first ran into God, he was immature and insecure. All of us find ourselves in this descriptor when we first come to believe. But that does not faze God. God goes to work to make us strong. In chapter 4 of Eugene Peterson's *Run with the Horses*, he describes how God took Jeremiah from a "shuffling, excuse-making" boy to a prophet with a "steel post career." Let's read Jeremiah 1:11-19.

In Shafter, California, near Bakersfield, my husband discovered a great little cafe in an old railroad dining car. Behind it lies an almond orchard. The almond trees bloom in February, when everything else is barren. Blooms cover the streets and all the area around the Red Wagon Café, giving a lovely feel of hope. Spring is coming, even in Bakersfield.

God gave Jeremiah such a sign, and God connected it to the reality that God is watching.

If you look at the Hebrew words for almond tree and watching, the words look identical. The noun, שָׁקֵד, shaped (almond tree); the verb שָׁקַד shoqed (watching).

God used a play on words to provide a twofold vision. God is always aware of Jeremiah's struggles, and gives hope when nothing seems fruitful. Eugene Peterson said this pun "trained Jeremiah in hope."<sup>1</sup> Whenever he saw an almond tree it would trigger this memory.

Do you ever feel alone? Maturity is knowing that when all else seems dead around you, you are not on a dead end street because God's presence and word are active. "God's words

are not mere words but promises that lead to fulfillments." (p. 54)

The next image God gave Jeremiah was a boiling pot. Even though it seems negative, Peterson says the vision is positive because it serves to contain evil. Do you get distressed when you see evil? Are you unsettled by today's political climate? The boiling pot indicates that God is in control. Peterson says give more validity to God's prophetic vision than what you hear in the media. Jeremiah's visions gave him balance, sanity, and passion. They helped him keep perspective. The visions kept him from becoming cynical. He could trust God is in control (56).

A friend took me to lunch for my birthday. She loves politics. For her it does not create anxiety. She interprets the news through the lens of Scripture and gets excited. She says, "Lord, I know all this trouble means Jesus is coming soon! Lord, your word is true! Fulfill your promises!"

How great is God's power to you? Do you see it at work in the world every day? Or, only when you get that break or life goes your way? Can you see God's power as strong and triumphant even when things do not look so great? Scripture tells us,

*As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*  
~ Isaiah 55:10-11

This is the power of God which oversees our lives 24/7. We have to look carefully to see it. Let's hear an example from early in our nation's founding.<sup>2</sup>

Squanto lived among the Patuxet people when traders arrived from England and came onshore. Squanto was fascinated by their metal tools and boarded the ship to trade with them. But shortly thereafter, he and four others were captured. The English were hoping the Indians could direct them to a water route to China.

Squanto was soon scrambling up the rigging to see everything to be seen and learn everything he could, especially

<sup>1</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Run with the Horses*, Chapter 4, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> This is a story summary using the book *Squanto* by Feenie Ziner (Hamden, Connecticut: Linnet Books, 1988).

to speak English. He could not wait for the thrilling future in England. Sassacomet, his father's old friend said these words as they parted company: "Let there be love in your heart, and goodness. Perhaps the Great Spirit will send you a vision someday. You have it in you to be a great leader of men." Squanto waited in anticipation for such a vision and purpose.

In England he lived in a nobleman's castle where he learned English. But, the man's poor investments led to financial collapse and Squanto found himself on the streets. A farmer took him in—labor for food and shelter. This good family introduced him to Jesus.

As the weeks and months passed, Squanto remembered Sassacomet's prophecy. Would it ever come to pass?

In 1614, after nine long years he finally returned to his homeland on a ship manned by Captain John Smith. The night they arrived in Cape Cod, Squanto dreamed a strange and terrible dream of being shipwrecked in a storm. People were huddled on a ledge by the shore. Doom filled the air. A woman reached down to save him, but another said *why him?* Just then a great wave swept him beyond her grasp and into the sea. All of them were eaten by the angry sea.

*Is this the vision*, he wondered? He fasted and prayed under the terror of the dream. He promised from then on to show love and gratitude and bring goodness and joy to his tribe when he returned home.

Three months following his return, another ship arrived. This time things would not go so well. There was a skirmish. Squanto and many others were kidnaped and taken to Spain to be sold. *Where was God? Did God see what happened? Would his life ever have purpose?*

He was bought by a monk who practiced English with Squanto and taught him the love of Christ. But later, with the smell of adventure in his nostrils, Squanto stowed away on a ship bound for England. When discovered, the ship owner, a Christian, took him in instead of imprisoning him. That man apologized for the evil of his fellow Englishmen.

As he did so Squanto realized, "I should be a fool if I believed all men of England to be alike. Like in England, among my people some are wise and some foolish; some kind, some cruel."

Should we not realize that too? In every culture, in every race, some are wise, some are fools; some are kind, some cruel. Shall we not judge a group as a whole?

After returning to Patuxet and finding his tribe wiped out by the plague, Squanto joined a neighboring tribe. Amazingly, *the original four captives were there*. Sassacomet repeated his prophecy made fourteen years earlier, "Squanto, you shall yet be a leader."

"But I have no people now," he replied.

"I know. But the spirit is in you. It shall come to pass."

That very month an English ship with a May flower painted upon her hull sailed into the harbor. They had planned to settle in Virginia but a severe storm blew the ship 250 miles to the north—to Cape Cod and the Pantuxet settlement, sitting protected in the cove by a freshwater stream; abandoned, yet it had an abundant supply of dried corn and seed. God's grace!

Yet half of the Pilgrims died that winter. When spring came, so did a lone Indian who spoke English. "Welcome gentlemen! Do you have beer?"

With Squanto as interpreter, the Wampanoag people and the Pilgrims made a treaty which would keep the peace between them for forty years. Squanto was filled with the force of a revelation. *Was this not the fulfillment of his great vision?* With a great freedom surging through him he realized a fresh task awaited him. Someone had need of him.

He moved into his childhood village. He taught the people techniques for survival in the wilderness; how to grow corn; build weirs to catch fish, and tried to teach them how to bathe. That last one was without success.

His help made all the difference and he became an esteemed member of their community, even being baptized. The Pilgrims considered his devotion a gift from God and they marveled at God sending someone who understood them and helped them far beyond their expectations.

That fall, after an abundant harvest they invited the Wampanoag people to a Thanksgiving feast that last three days. It was a feast of friendship and laughter among people who had triumphed against adversity.

When you look upon your life, as you face each day, have you awakened to the power of God all around you? Do you desire to be strengthened for the challenges we face today? Let us see that God is at work. God not only makes you and me strong, but also this church. Together we answer God's call to bless our community, no matter what tough ledge you stand on in life.

Look for the vision of hope, and do not fear the boiling pot of judgment. God will certainly carry out all of his plans. For God says, They will fight against you, but I am with you, and I will take care of you. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

AMEN