

Lenten Devotional March 15, 2021

Scripture

Jeremiah 16:1-21

1 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place. 3 For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bear them and the fathers who beget them in this land: 4 They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried; they shall become like dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth. 5 For thus says the LORD: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament, or bemoan them; for I have taken away my peace from this people, says the LORD, my steadfast love and mercy. 6 Both great and small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them; there shall be no gashing, no shaving of the head for them. 7 No one shall break bread for the mourner, to offer comfort for the dead; nor shall anyone give them the cup of consolation to drink for their fathers or their mothers. 8 You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink. 9 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to banish from this place, in your days and before your eyes, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. 10 And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, "Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?" 11 then you shall say to them: It is because your ancestors have forsaken me, says the LORD, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law; 12 and because you have behaved worse than your ancestors, for here you are, every one of you, following your stubborn evil will, refusing to listen to me. 13 Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor. 14 Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, "As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt," 15 but "As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them." For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their ancestors. 16 I am now sending for many fishermen, says the LORD, and they shall catch them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. 17 For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my presence, nor is their iniquity concealed from my sight. 18 And I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations. 19 O LORD, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble, to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say: Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit. 20 Can mortals make for themselves gods? Such are no gods! 21 "Therefore I am surely going to teach them, this time I am going to teach them my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the LORD."

Devotional

The Rev. Deborah Evanovich '94

My house of cards was beginning to fall all around me. Fifteen years of leading ministry in the church was going to disappear to a temporary supply because I could no longer make it through a Celebration of Worship without running to the bathroom. Six months had gone by—months spent suffering pneumonia . . . whooping cough . . . a strep infection . . . the indignity of always hiding behind a bathroom door—before someone was able to put a name on the problem: Crohn's Disease.

All these infirmities left me stranded on a couch . . . under a quilt . . . staring at the ceiling. No television. No reading. No music. Just biding my time and drug trials until I was so emaciated that, unable to walk, I entered the hospital in a wheelchair. The cards kept falling.

Crohn's Disease is supposedly an inherited disease, but my genome could not be identified in any of my ancestors that I knew. It was hidden in the very distant lineage only to be shaken awake in my body—probably due to the stress of pastoring a church in crisis.

In the next 14 years there would be surgeries, transfusions, IV drugs, breast cancer and radiation, and more surgery. At least twice, there was no assurance I would make it through the night. But I did—with the power and might of God!

God's power and might,
seen in the faces of those who prayed when I could not . . .
felt in the hands that ministered to me through each new hospitalization
and home recovery . . .
heard in the voices of those who pulled me out of the mire of self-pity . . .
inhaled in the fragrance of each new health professional who saved me . . .
worshipped in my expressions of thanksgiving for all that God had
restored in my life . . . for just being alive!

God's power and might,
restored in those who call on God's name and abide in God's hands.
God's power and might,
a whisper and a bellow.
God's power and might,
made available for all God's people who trust and believe.
God's power and might,
lived out in the life and death and resurrection of God's Son . . .
so no one who calls on the name of God will be lost.

Prayer

God of all that is behind us . . . of all that surrounds us now . . . and of all that is yet to be, we shake off the fear of life without you and discover during this season of Lent that you gift us with the power and might of Christ in the center of all life. Amen.