

Lenten Devotional March 6, 2023

Scripture

Jeremiah 1:11-19

¹¹The word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” ¹²Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.” ¹³The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north.”

¹⁴Then the LORD said to me: Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come and all of them shall set their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its surrounding walls and against all the cities of Judah. ¹⁶And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have made offerings to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. ¹⁷But you, gird up your loins; stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not break down before them, or I will break you before them. ¹⁸And I for my part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land — against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. ¹⁹They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you.

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Jeff Sterling '88/'98

Lent is a great time to get your eyesight checked, as this passage from Jeremiah reminds us. For those of us who seek to live according to God’s truth, there are three kinds of “eyesight” we may evaluate:

The eyesight with which we see light. Our natural eyes see two kinds of light: light from primary sources, and light reflected off objects around us. The obvious analogy raises two important questions—what are your primary sources of light, and what kinds of things do you gaze at to see reflected light? I’ll let you draw your own metaphorical conclusions from these questions, but don’t forget to regularly have your “real” vision checked!

The eyesight of the mind. Evaluating *what* we are seeing is the realm of our mind. If we don’t keep it progressing and sharp, we can too easily be deluded as to what we are *seeing* when we take stock of our *sitz im leben*, where God *is* in it, and what God is *up to* in the midst of it.

The eyesight of the Spirit. Just as there are wavelengths of light we can’t see without filters or special instruments, so there are images we miss if we ignore the agency of God’s Holy Spirit. This eyesight is kept astute by *exercising it*.

The important “word” to Jeremiah here is: “What do you see?” Whatever God is going to *do* almost always begins with this question. And the best answer requires us drilling down on what we “see” using all three forms of eyesight!

Prayer

God who pronounced the light “good,” Jesus, the light of the world, and Holy Spirit of reflection, illuminate what I see today and teach me what the images mean, as I seek to stay on the lighted path and to please you! Amen.