

**4th Sunday after the Epiphany    January 31, 2016**  
(It's also the last, no need for 5-8 this year, Transfiguration next week then **Lent** begins.)

**LUTHERAN**

## **LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY**

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday.  
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January 28, 2016 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH

(Also presented as a part of the bible study/worship service on Wednesdays, 5:30pm, at the home of Robert Russo, a Puritas Lutheran Church member. E-mail [puritaspastor@hotmail.com](mailto:puritaspastor@hotmail.com) for details.)



<http://proverbs31.org/online-bible-studies/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/07/MUK-Week-2-Verse-Psalm-71.8.jpg>

### **Hymn of the Day**

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 842 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) not listed  
“Son of God, eternal Saviour”**

“IN BABILONE is a traditional Dutch melody that appeared in *Oude en Nieuwe Hollandse Boerenlities en Contradansen (Old and New Dutch Peasant Songs and Country Dances)*, c. 1710. Ralph Vaughan Williams ([PHH 316](#)) discovered this tune as arranged by Julius Rontgen (b. Leipzig, Germany, 1855; d. Utrecht, the Netherlands, 1932) and included it in *The English Hymnal* (1906), from which it gained widespread use. A rounded barform tune (AABA), IN BABILONE provides a fine setting for Psalm 117's cosmic scope. Because this song has only one stanza, use the tune as an alternate to other texts in 87 87 D so that congregations may sing it more often. Stretch the cadence a bit to catch a breath at the end of line 3 (ending in the word *accord*).”

--*Psalter Hymnal Handbook*, 1988 [http://www.hymnary.org/tune/in\\_babilone](http://www.hymnary.org/tune/in_babilone)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6j8AVjTIhM> With a nod to Star Wars

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7M9yL0Jdy0> Same hymn, different tune.

[English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#)

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*So much for being back on track with the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL).*

**Jeremiah 1:4-10 [17-19]; RCL verses 4-10 (next week: Deuteronomy 34:1-12; RCL Exodus 34:29-35)**

**The Call of Jeremiah** (Colors added to help “see” the conversation)

<sup>4</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

<sup>5</sup> “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you;  
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

<sup>6</sup> Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only  
a youth.” <sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to me,

“Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;  
for to all to whom I send you, you shall go,  
and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

<sup>8</sup> Do not be afraid of them,  
for I am with you to deliver you,  
declares the LORD.”

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me,

“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

<sup>10</sup> See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

<sup>11</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see an almond<sup>[a]</sup> branch.” <sup>12</sup> Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.”

<sup>13</sup> The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.” <sup>14</sup> Then the LORD said to me, “Out of the north disaster<sup>[b]</sup> shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. <sup>15</sup> For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the LORD, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. <sup>16</sup> And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands. <sup>17</sup> *But you, dress yourself for work,<sup>[c]</sup> arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them.* <sup>18</sup> *And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land.* <sup>19</sup> *They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you.*”

- a. [Jeremiah 1:11](#) *Almond* sounds like the Hebrew for *watching* (compare verse [12](#))
- b. [Jeremiah 1:14](#) The Hebrew word can mean *evil, harm, or disaster*, depending on the context; so throughout Jeremiah
- c. [Jeremiah 1:17](#) Hebrew *gird up your loins*

“In one way, we have here a typical prophetic call story. God calls, the prophet objects, God assures (often through a specific action--here, the touching of Jeremiah's mouth) and then commissions.

A distinctive element of Jeremiah's call story, though, is God's opening claim of omniscient authorial control over Jeremiah's life. "Before I formed you ...I knew...consecrated...and appointed you." This aspect of the passage has been cited in Christian deliberations about such varied issues as abortion, predestination, and whether or not God has "a plan (including a particular vocation) for my life."

The hermeneutical question for the preacher is how far and on what terms to encourage identification between contemporary Christians and Jeremiah. Narrowly we might "look back" to

the historical encounter and say, "God cared for our ancestors by calling and sending prophets ... *back then*." But because we preachers (and hearers) yearn for a richer connection with this text--and with the God who calls--we push to make Jeremiah a type for us: Jeremiah's experience might in some way be *our* experience.

But how far will it stretch? The "I knew you" part is safe; let us assume that God knows everyone before they are formed in the womb. But does God also consecrate and appoint *all* of God's people to specific vocations or only those destined to become prophets? If *all*, does that mean that God has an "authored plan" for each of our lives? What are the means by which God communicates our consecration and appointment? And what are the consequences should we pursue another line of work?

Jeremiah objects the call on the basis of his age and ability. God responds intuitively about what the real issues are, thereby showing that God really *does* know Jeremiah! In God's assurance we can infer that God intuited phobias (at least agora- and xeno-) and writer's block: "You will go where I send and you shall speak what I command you." The grace of the passage is that God believes Jeremiah to be a sufficient vessel for this work; nowhere does God set forth a training regimen or a process of board certification for the prophet.

The reader of the passage has an interesting choice when voicing Jeremiah's objection and then God's rebuttal. The default option is likely "naïve, fearful humility." But we know from Jeremiah 1:1-3 that Jeremiah is a pastor's kid destined (as he well knows?) to go into the family business. It is possible that Jeremiah's objection was *pro forma*, an appropriate display of false modesty. God's voice in response might be anything from kindly encouragement to impatient frustration.

The last verse, read on its surface, is a general affirmation of the power and inclination of God to act in the affairs of nations. A homiletical possibility here would be to consider exactly where and how we see God acting in contemporary political affairs. In the Bible, God acts dramatically and sometimes precipitously. By contrast, was God "building" and "planting" when Queen Elizabeth II invited David Cameron to form a coalition government following the indecisive elections in the United Kingdom earlier this year?

To focus mostly on the last verse in a sermon would be a tricky move for a couple of reasons. First, the dialogue between Jeremiah and God clearly dominates the pericope; a consideration of just verse 10 would require some careful framing. Second, the Old Testament assumes a kind of exclusivity for the "covenantal theocracy" of Judah (and Israel). Certainly some twenty-first century citizens are willing to claim a similar relationship between God and their homeland, but most of us are more modest in our claims. Still, a sermon that takes up Jeremiah's role as God's voice in politics would invite consideration of the voice we modern prophets might have.

All that said, when I am sitting in the pew on August 22, I would like to hear some reflection on vocation and how to achieve balance between "call as gracious gift" and "call as a burden impossible to contemplate." How much should our vocation weigh on us? Does God call us to be "merely" who God knows us to be, or is there, built into our call, a sense of "be what I know you could be if you really put your mind to it?"

In a culture that calls for (and pretends to) excellence, most of us strive to perfect our skills and to hide our vocational weaknesses. But hear the grace of God embedded in the phrase, "do not say, 'I am only ...'" Can you end that address from God in such a way that I will hear how even with my limitations I might be used by God? By entering into our vocation with a notion of an "easy yoke" and a "light burden" we point to the God whose word, ability, and power sustains us.

Or help me to understand where the prophetic voice is lodged in the politics of our world (in me, the preacher, the Church as a body); what is its scope (congregation, Church, government); and how do I (or we) understand what kind of authority it is in our world to have been consecrated and appointed as a prophet of God. The Old Testament prophets were calling the kings and people of Judah and Israel to renew their allegiance to the God with whom they were in covenant. In the United States, at least, our "rulers" swear allegiance to a secular constitution.

Finally, though it would depart from the core issues, a sermon rooted in verse 5 of Jeremiah's call story could investigate the idea of "God having a plan" for our lives. Discerning God's plan (the right vocation, the right partner) is, for some Christians, fraught with excitement and anxiety. Beyond our shared vocation in baptism, what *do* we believe about God's choreography and authorship in our lives?"

Pastor Langknecht has put some thought into this commentary – so this week you have it in its entirety [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=661](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=661)

**Henry Langknecht** Associate Professor of Homiletics **Trinity Lutheran Seminary Columbus, OH**

## **Psalm 71:1-6 [7-11]; RCL, verses 1-6 (Psalm 99)**

### **Forsake Me Not When My Strength Is Spent**

- 71 In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;  
let me never be put to shame!
- <sup>2</sup> In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;  
incline your ear to me, and save me!
- <sup>3</sup> Be to me a rock of refuge,  
to which I may continually come;  
you have given the command to save me,  
for you are my rock and my fortress.
- <sup>4</sup> Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,  
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.
- <sup>5</sup> For you, O Lord, are my hope,  
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
- <sup>6</sup> Upon you I have leaned from before my birth;  
you are he who took me from my mother's womb.  
My praise is continually of you.
- <sup>7</sup> *I have been as a portent to many,  
but you are my strong refuge.*

<sup>8</sup> *My mouth is filled with your praise,  
and with your glory all the day.*  
<sup>9</sup> *Do not cast me off in the time of old age;  
forsake me not when my strength is spent.*  
<sup>10</sup> *For my enemies speak concerning me;  
those who watch for my life consult together*  
<sup>11</sup> *and say, "God has forsaken him;  
pursue and seize him,  
for there is none to deliver him."*

"This psalm has long been one of my favorites.

While it appears to have been written by an older person (verses 9, 18), the psalm taken as a whole is a prayer appropriate at any age. For years, I had verses 17-18 taped onto the wall by my desk, using these words as a prayer to keep my daily task of teaching or preaching in focus...

Considered as a whole, the psalm may well be named a psalm of trust. I have used it as part of a trio of trust psalms, with Psalm 131 providing a picture from the beginning of life, Psalm 23 coming out of the stresses and strains of the midst of life ("even though I walk through the darkest valley", verse 4) and 71 giving expression to reflections of a senior citizen...

Cries for help dominate the first four verses: "deliver me...rescue me...save me...Rescue me." The psalm is rich in pictures for God: "rock of refuge...strong fortress...my rock...my fortress..." and then, without imagery, simply "my God."

Especially striking is the "life review" section in verses 5 and 6. The one praying this psalm is no recent convert to the faith. The pray-er says that the Lord has been "my hope, my trust...from my youth." Here is a pastoral point worth making: When the psalmist is needing help from those making his life miserable, from difficult situations being faced, he looks back at his lifetime of experience with God. He is saying, "Lord, you've helped me out of tough times before. I've depended on you ever since I was born! So, Lord, how about bailing me out once again!"...

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=499](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=499)

**A perspective from an "older" pastor. He retired 15 years ago. [James Limburg](#) Professor Emeritus of Old Testament **Luther Seminary Saint Paul, MN****

**1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:3, RCL 13:1-13 (*Hebrews 3:1-6, 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2*)**

<sup>1</sup> *But earnestly desire the higher gifts. (final verse last week)* And I will show you a still more excellent way.

### **The Way of Love**

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,

but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,<sup>[a]</sup> but have not love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

<sup>13</sup> So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- a. [1 Corinthians 13:3](#) Some manuscripts *deliver up my body [to death] that I may boast*
- b. [1 Corinthians 13:5](#) Greek *irritable and does not count up wrongdoing*



**“The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 4th Chapter”**

**“Glory to You, O Lord”**

**Luke 4:31-44; RCL Luke 4:21-30 (Luke 4:9:28-36; RCL adds [37-43a])**

### Jesus Heals a Man with an Unclean Demon

<sup>31</sup> And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, <sup>32</sup> and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. <sup>33</sup> And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, <sup>34</sup> “Ha!<sup>[b]</sup> What have

you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”<sup>35</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “**Be silent and come out of him!**” And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm.<sup>36</sup> And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!”<sup>37</sup> And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

### Jesus Heals Many

<sup>38</sup> And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf.<sup>39</sup> And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

<sup>40</sup> Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.<sup>41</sup> And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he **rebuked** them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

### Jesus Preaches in Synagogues

<sup>42</sup> And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them,<sup>43</sup> but he said to them, “**I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.**”<sup>44</sup> And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.<sup>[4]</sup>

- a. [Luke 4:27](#) *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see [Leviticus 13](#)
- b. [Luke 4:34](#) *Or Leave us alone*
- c. [Luke 4:44](#) Some manuscripts *Galilee*

Twenty translations use the verb “rebuke”, two change it to “command” (Douay-Rheims and NET Bible), and one to “ordered” (GOD’S WORD Translation). One emphasis of this reading in the authority of Jesus, perhaps said better as “command” or “order”

[Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#) (31) And came down to Capernaum.—See Note on [Matthew 4:13](#). St. Luke, it will be noticed, gives, what St. Matthew does not give, the reason of the removal. <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/luke/4-31.htm>

*Ted and Rick are silent on this reading – visit them at [www.angusday.org](http://www.angusday.org) - Pastor Charles Henrickson is not. Read his sermon at - <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2013/02/his-word-possessed-authority-sermon-on-luke-431-44-by-pr-charles-henrickson/>*