

"RUN WITH HORSES?" 2020-09-27AM

Series: _ Title: Run with Horses?

Readings: Jer12:5 Cited: Jer11:18; Jer1:10; Jer29:11-13; Lam3:22-23

1.1. INTRO

Jeremiah had one of the toughest ministries in the Old Testament.

Jer1:10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

He had to repeatedly call an unrepentant Israel to "Shoev" (repent).

It was a tough call and a tough congregation.

During his ministry Jeremiah experienced a lot of opposition:

- He was locked in stocks,
- people plotted to kill him,
- he was beaten and thrown into a muddy pit
- and was dragged off to Egypt by a rebellious king.

Throughout the book Jeremiah is brutally honest and wrestles with God over all that is happening. While it is not easy to read, his candid wrestling with God provides us with a strange degree of "comfort" because of the honesty of the relationship and the fact that Jeremiah gets through it with faith intact and a deep love for his people still burning in his heart.

In chapter 11 Jeremiah experiences resistance from people in his own home town - who plot against him to end his life and silence him permanently.

We read about Jeremiah's rude awakening in Jer 11:18:

Because the LORD revealed their plot to me,
I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing.
I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter;
I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying,
"Let us destroy the tree and its fruit;
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
that his name be remembered no more."

This shakes Jeremiah to the core and he's ready to give up on them.

His attitude is "Drag them off like sheep to be slaughtered!"

1.2. HOW WOULD YOU EXPECT GOD TO RESPOND TO JEREMIAH?

Would He

- Comfort Jeremiah?
- Encourage him?
- Take care of him in the desert like Elijah?
- Maybe rebuke him?

God's response is unexpected:

"If you have raced with men on foot
and they have worn you out,
how can you compete with horses?

If you stumble in safe country,
how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?"

"Do you think it's going to get any easier???"

The point of God's question is that Jeremiah can't compete with horses.

No one can.

And no-one's skin is thick enough for the thorny thickets of Jordan.
He will need help.

1.3. WE HAVE TO LEARN THE DANGER OF BEING TOO SELF-DEPENDENT

The only way to survive is to enter the battle with God's help.

I can't depend

- on people
- my learning,
- or even my track-record.
- or my skill,
- my experience

There will come a time that I have to admit that I need help.

1.4. WE'RE NOT GOING BACK TO NORMALITY...

We have emerged chrysalis-like from our cocoon into a changed world.

We are not the same anymore as we were
and we are not returning to the world we remember.

But it's a world that's scrambling to find its feet.

I'm sorry to see that I am seeing more rush and greed
than thought and generosity.

This is not going to be a sprint, but a *marathon*.

We are not competing with men, we are competing with horses,
we are running into a thorny thicket.

We will need help.

1.5. SO WHAT WILL WE NEED?

1. Radical Dependence on God
2. A deep well of resilience and stamina
3. A mindset devoted to helping others and making a difference
4. A commitment to personal growth and renewal (being the best we can be)

How do we get to that?

1. Start by admitting that we will need help.
2. Put time with God as a priority - be real
3. Be quiet - Take time to take stock of your soul
 - Check your balance
 - Look after body, mind, relationships and your spiritual life...
4. Care for others
5. Ask for help

CONCLUSION

As tough as Jeremiah's ministry was:

1. He purchased land in Israel even as the Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem
2. He believed that God could do a new thing in the midst of upheaval
3. He sat in the ruins of Jerusalem and said:
"The Steadfast Love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end,
They are new every morning and great is your faithfulness."
4. He wrote to the exiles in Babylon
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.