

# 11.19.2023 Sermon

## God's Gifts | Jeremiah 1:5-10

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gifts, jeremiah, god, people, pastor, put, child, life, limitations, pro athlete, neurons, doubters, anton, text, forgotten, bible, responsible adults, hear, lord, ideas

### SPEAKERS

Rev. James Bady  
Rev. Dr. Tracy L. Saletta

#### **Rev. James Bady:**

I have the opportunity to continue on our current sermon series called "Choose Your Own Adventure." Each of the speakers is allowed to pull from a text that is one of their favorites, and kind of talk about that and kind of expound on some of the stories of their life. And some of the key themes that they think are important, as we look at our community.

I was looking with great anticipation for what other preachers select as their scripture. I was wondering if anybody would drift off into Judges. I was wondering, you know, let's get a little bit of Leviticus. And everybody's like, no, you can have that, you can have it. So, it's amazing. Also, that a number of the speakers, our favorite books of the Bible, are also the same. And we strive for diversity on many different levels. But at our heart, we all seem to love the same, which is refreshing to see.

So, I'm going to a scripture that you've or text or a book of the Bible that you've seen before, Jeremiah one, and I'm gonna read verses five through 10. And I want to focus on the things that are God's gifts to us. The things that are God's gifts to us and the world. So, I'm going to read from the NRSV version, and you guys have heard me refund this. So, it's a little bit different from King James, which is the and thou, which is what I grew up in. So, if I drift into the or thou, that's just because that's how I grew up. But I'm gonna read it in a language that hopefully you can better understand.

Let's read. "So, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you, and appointed you a prophet to the nations. Then I said, oh, Lord God, truly, I do not know how to speak, for I'm only a boy. But the Lord said to me, "Do not say I am only

a boy, for you shall go to all to whom I will send you, and you shall speak to whoever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord, then the Lord put out his hand and touch my mouth. And the Lord said to me, now I have put my words in your mouth. See, today, I appoint you over nations, over kingdoms, to pluck up, to pull down, to destroy, to overthrow, and to build, and to plant.”

The reading of the word. So, in this reading, it's a common text, especially from the tradition I come from, to speak on this text as it relates to installing new ministers, pastors, things like that; people that are about to go into a ministry, where tough times could also come. And if you're really honest with yourself as a person that is in ministry, that you have limitations, you have physical, earthly limitations of who you are and who you could be. And so, it's always comforting to have in the back of your mind that there's someone out there like Jeremiah, who had limitations as well, who also couldn't go and do great things. This is the comfort of this text, that in your limitations, there still greatness in your smallness of your mind, there is still a bigness that you can do. There is a gift that is given to you. That is regardless of the limitations of you. Right.

But I think there's a broader reading of this, that this goes beyond just pastors and ministers and preachers and people who stand up here and it is to the broader community that we all in our way are given from birth. I know you, we all have a piece of God, seating us for life. God knows you. Right?

So that is the broader application that I want to put on today's texts, and want you to try to start thinking about the history of your life, where you felt this urge of, I'm something more than this. I'm more than this. Not I'm better than this, because that implies, oh, I got to do something morally better. I gotta do what I'm doing better, like, those people are telling me I'm bad. So, I gotta get better, no, more than this. All of the descriptions of people are just descriptions of people. But God has put something in me. That's more than this. Right?

So, as an example, have you ever talked to a child? And ask them? What do you want to be when you grow up? We won't be, we won't be. And they come up with these amazing answers, right? So, they're, they'll say things, so if they're a little shy they start out with something like, Oh, I'll be a doctor and a lawyer. And maybe on the weekends, I'll be a pro athlete. So, I'm going to be the doctor, you know, Monday, Tuesday, the lawyer Wednesday, Thursday, I may take Friday off because, you know, got some things to do. And then on the weekends, you know, play sports.

And then they'll loosen up even more and say, you know, I want to go to the moon. So, I'm gonna build a cart. We're gonna go to the moon. And we're going to walk around for a while and meet some people and plant some things. And I think I'll build a house there. And then

after I build the house, I'm gonna come back because I'm a doctor. And I'm a cure all the diseases because we've had those long enough. There you go. There you go. Right. And then of course, of course, I'm going to be the starting quarterback for Philadelphia, Philadelphia Eagles, so we can win the Superbowl. Right? These are the ideas that children share with us. And because we're responsible adults, responsible adults, we start asking the child, some clarifying questions. We started saying, you know, well, I don't do all that. You're gonna get trained for all of that. And the child the first few times, was it? Yeah. I don't know. But it'll be fun. It'll be fine. We'll just do it. Right. And they're unaffected by the questions that come their way. Because they firmly believe they are extraordinary. They firmly believe they can do extraordinary things. They firmly believe there is a purpose that they are for. They believe it.

But unfortunately, as responsible adults, we continue to ask questions about being practical, and put tangible things around it. And day by day, the belief seeps into doubt. And the doubt becomes a regular and the regular becomes normal. In the belief, phase, has anybody seen that happen to someone?

There's an author called and whose name is Anton Chekhov, C H. E. K. H. O. V. And the title of his article is "Man is What He Believes" under the biochemistry of belief. So, Anton talks about the studies that have been conducted on people that analyze our brains and our bodies, based on what we perceive and believe, is the start as a scientist, so This is not theology, he could care less, he starts this way. So, you are what you believe you are not arbitrarily taking in information purely based on what you believe you will either take information in or shield it out based on what you believe you will attack or be in submission. And so over time as things you hear, start to change what you believe. And once you believe it, the chemistry of your body starts to change. Like what, what? Yes, your receptors of your brain start to change, to let more in what you already believe, and deflect off those things that are incongruent. I won't go into a lot more detail because it gets kind of technical about neurons and things like that and how they expand or, or shrink, but I'll put this out there and see if you resonate with this...

Have you ever had in your mind a new car you want to buy? Now, you've never seen this car on the street? You've certainly not seen this color. I had this conversation the other day and I was all excited. I'll say, you know, for my XYZ birthday, have a buy this one car.

She said, 'Oh, what's that?' And I went on and explained it to her. And I was like, 'oh, it's got this and this, and I think I'm gonna get this color.' Two weeks later, three or four those bad boys went past me. I was like, 'Where did this car come from? What this is my neighborhood I've lived here.' So, do you think new cars moved in? Or did my brain start to change?

My receptors on that kind of car went way up. My vision for that color went way up. And everything else started to fade. This is what Anton is talking about, and about how we believe changes what we see and changes what we search to do what we search to do.

So now this is the conversation that's going on between God. Jeremiah, Jeremiah sees himself as a boy. Jeremiah sees himself as incapable. Jeremiah sees himself as someone in the crowd. Jeremiah doesn't see someone as someone you will be talking about today. So, if we take away the pluck up, put down, destroy and all that language of Jeremiah. The key thing is, Jeremiah accepted the new information that God stepped on the scene to redirect his life. God steps on the same in each and every one of our lives, to give us information about the tools that he's put in you for the direction of your life of your life.

Now it's an interesting piece, because if you think about the phases of your life that are common with children's, what do you want to do when you grow up as an adolescent? We talk about what career you want. And as an adult, we talk about how am I pleased with the life so far? So, this is common, common questions. But the thing is, what are you going to do about the common questions of your life? That God is constantly teasing upon you? Who do you want to be someone that pleases God? Or someone that pleases the doubters around you? That's the challenge. That is the tension that Jeremiah had he chose wisely. 'Okay, God, if you tell me to go out, go, God if you speak and do it, direct and guide, I'll do it.' And I hope and pray that you would do the same thing today.

I love taking Bible scriptures and comparing it to the world of today. So what else Tom is doing is basically what the Bible says is 'whatsoever man think. So is.' That's all he's saying.

And for those of you old enough to remember the late 80s and early 1990s, you remember may remember this gentleman, an inspirational speaker Les Brown, right, or a pastor by the name of Myles Munroe. Right. And they talked about this thing about where is the wealthiest place on earth.

You guys remember where it is, it is a cemetery. It is not the oil fields of the Middle East, it is not the diamond mines of South Africa, it is not the gold reserves down in South America. It is the grave. Why? Because in it is filled with the ideas and inventions that the world needs for its problems. Today. every problem, every situation already has a solution.

But we're too afraid to walk forward with a new information given to them by God. It is you. It is you. It is each and every one of you in this room, you have a solution to a problem that we experienced today. And we have many.

So fortunately, it is many of you. Fortunately, there are many seeds in you. Fortunately, you find the courage, as we were talking about early in service, to walk out on this life and do the things that you are supposed to do.

You know, I can hear some of you saying well, 'oh, wait, hold on. This sounds like nothing but you know, positive thinking cures. Give me a break. Give me a break.' You know, and let's be honest, I'm a little bit too old, a little bit too short to be a pro athlete right now. So how far does this go? That's okay. I get you, I get you.

You know, as a child. And as we grow up, and even as an adult, our ideas come from many different places. They come from our family, they come from friends, but every now and then you can kind of tell that was a different idea. That was different. You ever hear child after all of that was say something that seems so benevolent. And so out of the norm? You're like, 'wow, that's, that's different for a six year old. Find that one. Find that one.' Because that is likely the one that died with the rest of the doubters find that one? Because in it, there is a resurrection. In it. There is a starting point for why am I here.

Because you don't want to be the person that on your journey on this thing call life. At the end of his life. You can only say two things. I breathe. And I breed I had children. Even though children are the love of my life, my wife would tell my children I love my life. But I have to be more than that. Because the gift that was given to me was bigger than that. It was more than that.

And some of you may say well, I think I got the gag gift or the movie gift. Okay, you know, we're in the holiday season where we were, you know, this is just before Thanksgiving. A week or so ago was this celebration called Diwali. After that we're going into Christmas Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, New Year's, and a piece of all of these different types of holidays is this gift giving, that occurs. And if you work in corporate America, they start having these holiday parties where you come together and you eat and you exchange gifts. And they have what they call the gag gifts. Right, they want it to be inexpensive. And something you had around your house that you do not want or did not want. But hey, bring it. Let's have some fun. Let's laugh have a good time. Right?

And so, if you've ever been to one of these, there's these moments that happen in these office parties. There's, 'oh, that's a decent gift. Wow, I can't believe they're giving that away.' And so, depending on the type of office, party you attend, there's the stealing of the someone else's gift in it. Yep. So, there's the gifts nobody wants. And then there's the gifts that one or two, only, only one or two that everybody wants. And so, there's laughter that breaks out because of the ways that people try to hide the good ones, and put the ones you don't want to get stuck with out front and say, 'hey, please come get this.' Right. That's, I believe what people think about

the seeds of life that God gives them. That there's these gag gifts. There're these booby gifts. Right?

But then there's always this moment in the ones that I've been in that someone saw something in the gag gift that no one else saw. And they want to get it. And so, people say, 'Well, why did you choose that?' Instead, because I know what to do with it. I know what to do with this. But you couldn't see that no one else wanted. But I see it. And everybody goes, 'Wow, maybe I'll steal it from you. Now that I can see the beauty. Now. I want it.'

And I think from that story, some of our lives we you know, again, I think God gives out gag gifts. But I take from that story, a couple of things. One, there is no gag gifts. In God. God isn't walking around heaven saying 'okay, what can I get up out of here? What trash do I have, that I need to get rid of?' That is not how heaven works.

And then the second part is, if treat it properly, all your gifts are gone. You just got to see what's in it. You got to see what God sees in you first, then others can see. But you got to see you first for how you are meant to be and not listen to what others are saying.

Please, do not allow your neurons to be changed in a way that now you can't even hear God. You have to change. Change what you hear, change what you see. Change your environment. Because there's a seed, and you are in with this. I don't know why we do this to ourselves. I don't want you to return to heaven with your gift unopened, not unwrapped, not used, and wonder, "God, why didn't you use me?" It's there. My call to you today, from Jeremiah, is to hear the voice of God. Embrace the gifts that have been given to you and watch the world value all that you are. Amen?

I told her she could not get a mic today. But, it is the Spirit of the Lord who told me to tell her that there was no way she wasn't going to pick up the mic.

**Rev. Dr. Tracy Saletta:**

Pastor James, I'm so sorry. It's your preaching. You know, I'm such a firm believer in the need to respond. Otherwise, we just walk out of here. We go to lunch. And we forget; we just do. We're people; we're human.

What is on my heart, when Pastor James was talking, was how many lost dreams are in this room? How many lost gifts are here? Maybe something is stirring. And it's that song, what are you saying? What are you? Where are you going?

As he was talking, in my brain, I'm going, what have I lost or forgotten? That God has been inviting me into. So, I want to do my trusty little cards. If I took them all up here, I don't know why I did that. I want to hand them out. And I just want to pause for a minute and thank you for that, Pastor James. It's so powerful and so beautiful.

I want to pause, and I want to give a boundary on this. It is not a gift, or a vision that is out of our hands. What I mean by that is, I want to get married, I want to... you know the things that guys, we don't know. This is about gifts. These are something that God has planted in your heart.

So, can we pause for a moment and just ask God: what are you saying? Where are you going? Where are you inviting me into? What have I forgotten? Just take a few moments, write it down. What I want you to do is just tuck it away. Put it in a Bible, put it in your pocket, put it in a purse, put it in your wallet. And just take the next week and spend some time praying over it. Spend some time going, "How, God?". Spend some time between you and God saying, "Restore the gifting to me, restore the vision for that gift for me". Because God never took it away, we forgot.

So, we're just going to do this for one minute. Going to go quiet. Where are you going, God? What are you saying, God? What have I forgotten, God? I just hear these words: it's never too late. It's never too late. If you're not remembering in this moment, that's okay. Just take the card home with you. And spend some time praying over it this week. Because, as Pastor James said, you have been given something. Nobody enters Earth that has not been given something. No one. No one.