***Jeremiah 1:1-19 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. 4Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 5“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” 6Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.” 7But the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,” says the Lord. 9Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. 10See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.” 11Moreover the 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 ready to perform My word.” 13And the word of the Lord came to me the second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north.” 14Then the Lord said to me: “Out of the north calamity shall break forth On all the inhabitants of the land. 15For behold, I am calling  
All the families of the kingdoms of the north,” says the Lord; “They shall come and each one set his throne At the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, Against all its walls all around, And against all the cities of Judah. 16I will utter My judgments Against them concerning all their wickedness, Because they have forsaken Me, Burned incense to other gods, And worshiped the works of their own hands. 17“Therefore prepare yourself and arise, And speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, Lest I dismay you before them. 18For behold, I have made you this day A fortified city and an iron pillar, And bronze walls against the whole land - Against the kings of Judah, Against its princes, Against its priests, And against 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.”***

Tonight, we are in Jeremiah 1. As we will have several holidays and meetings in the coming weeks, I thought it’d be fun to grab a lesson from the very long book of Jeremiah. It meshes well with what we’ve studied. Jeremiah lived from about 650 BC to 570 BC. Called to be a Prophet in 626 BC. he’s known as the Weeping Prophet, and is credited with Lamentations as well as Jeremiah. Jewish tradition also says that he authored 1 and 2 Kings, using his scribe Baruch ben Neriah.

Verse 1 *The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin.* The words that Jeremiah is receiving, in terms of prophecies, from God, are what make up this book of the Bible. He is the son of Hilkiah. Hilkiah was a common name in that time, with a High Priest named Hilkiah, but theologians don’t believe Jeremiah to be the son of this priest. The High Priest dwelt in Jerusalem. The son of a High Priest likely would have been designated as such. Jeremiah’s father, Hilkiah, dwells in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin. This is a city given to the Levite priests about 4 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Regardless, Jeremiah was a priest, which likely makes him a teacher of the Law. The city was nearly destroyed by the Babylonians and, in Nehemiah 7:27, we learn that only 128 men returned from the exile to this city.

Verse 2 *to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.*The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah by prophecy in the days of Josiah, the young king. Josiah was in the process of reforming Israel, purging the nation of idols, images, Ashtaroth’s, and high places. 2 Chron 34 tells us that Josiah started this work in the 12th year of his reign. It was the very next year that Jeremiah, young himself, began to prophesy. Perhaps, this was in support of Josiah, but the people’s eagerness to sin and hatred of righteousness proved to be a great adversary.

Verse 3 *It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.* It, meaning the word of the Lord, came in the days of Jehoiakim and Jeremiah prophesied until the end of Zedekiah’s reign, until Jerusalem was carried away captive. Jeremiah kept warning until the Babylonians captured Jerusalem. For forty years, he sought to call the country to repentance and was hated for it. Jeremiah was eventually led into captivity, just as the people he loved. Naming the two kings gives us a dependable date to pin the writing of the book of Jeremiah.

Verses 4-5 *Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 5“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”* God now speaks to Jeremiah – Before Jeremiah was conceived, God knew him. That should make us all jump for joy! God knows us, has us in His sights, and knows how we are best suited to serve the Kingdom. The verse here has the idea of someone approved for a work. Acts 15:18 tells us that *Known to God from eternity are all His works*. Before Jeremiah was born, God set him apart for the work of a prophet. We know of other examples of this – John the Baptist being one. God assures Jeremiah that He has ordained him a prophet to not just the Jewish nation, but to many nations. This is much needed encouragement to the young prophet.

Verse 6 *Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”* Like Moses protesting that he was not a good speaker, Jeremiah now claims he is too young. This shouldn’t be heard that Jeremiah is a child, but rather that he considers himself to youthful for such a commission. The same Hebrew word is used elsewhere to mean first years of manhood.

Verses 7-8 *But the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,” says the Lord.* ***But*** *the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.* God doesn’t accept his excuse. Instead, He repeats the assignment. God repeats it as a promise, not so much as a commandment, again giving Jeremiah reassurance that he will be given the words to speak and the boldness and courage to speak them. *Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you –* God again reiterates that He is with Jeremiah and that He is empowering the prophet He is sending. He not only calls, but equips the called.

Verses 9-10 *Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. 10See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.”* ***Then*** *the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth –* The Lord touches Jeremiah’s mouth spiritually. The Hebrew doesn’t have the idea of a physical touch, but rather a divine touch. *Behold, I have put My words in your mouth* - In Isaiah 51:16, God says something similar to Isaiah - *And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, That I may plant the heavens, Lay the foundations of the earth, And say to Zion, ‘You are My people*.’ God indeed placed His word in both Jeremiah and Isaiah’s mouth, giving them the boldness and the sheer truth to speak. *See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms –* God sent Jeremiah to speak His word, not just to Jews, but all nations. *To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.* Again, this is similar to Isaiah 51:16. Jeremiah is to reveal truth and root out the lies and the wickedness. He is to make known the plans and purposes of God.

Verses 11-12*Moreover the 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 ready to perform My word.”* ***Moreover*** *the word of the Lord came to me –* At the same time as the previous verses, the word of the Lord came again. *saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see? –* God now shows Jeremiah a symbol, asking what Jeremiah sees. *And I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.* One has to think that Jeremiah sees leaves and possibly blossoms on the branch, because he’s able to readily identify it as a branch from an almond tree. Almond trees are known for being an early spring tree. In some parts of Israel, they bloom as early as January. This gives the impression that, as the almond tree is eager to bloom, God is eager to perform His word. He is hastening toward the execution of His plan. Time is short. The Hebrew gives the idea of time now being up and the plan of God is coming to fruition. *You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.* God now says that He will hasten or quicken His word. He has warned and Judah and Jerusalem have ignored. Now, it will come quickly.

Verses 13-14 *And the word of the Lord came to me the second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north.” 14Then the Lord said to me: “Out of the north calamity shall break forth On all the inhabitants of the land.* Again, God asks what Jeremiah sees. ***I see****a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north*. God’s judgements are now at a boil, steam rolling off and drifting out of the north toward the south. The enemy that God is fervently raising up will come from the north toward Jerusalem. *Then the Lord said to me: “Out of the north calamity shall break forth On all the inhabitants of the land.* Of course, we know that the Babylonians and the Chaldeans will sweep like a rushing wind down from the north and overrun Judah and Jerusalem, taking the people away into captivity.

Verses 15-16 *For behold, I am calling All the families of the kingdoms of the north,” says the Lord; “They shall come and each one set his throne At the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, Against all its walls all around, And against all the cities of Judah. 16I will utter My judgments Against them concerning all their wickedness, Because they have forsaken Me, Burned incense to other gods, And worshiped the works of their own hands.* ***For*** *behold, I am calling All the families of the kingdoms of the north –* Babylon’s strength was in the cooperation of many allied nations. Nebuchadnezzar formed an army of many nations, Chaldeans, Medes, Armenians, and many others. *They shall come and each one set his throne -*When the Babylonians conquered a land, the general would set up a tent in the city with a throne to show that the city or country is now under complete control. This was done when Judah was overrun and destroyed. *I will utter My judgments Against them concerning all their wickedness –* God will utter His judgements against the Jews. Through the Babylonians, He will no longer speak, but will bring the execution of judgement upon the people.

Verse 17*“Therefore prepare yourself and arise, And speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, Lest I dismay you before them.* Gird up your garments and prepare to do the work at hand. Arise and act with vigor. Pursue the purpose I’ve placed before you. *And speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces –* Have no fear or hesitation to speak My word as I command. *Lest I dismay you before them –* Don’t fear these stiff-necked and hardened sinners, especially the royal and the powerful. He reminds Jeremiah it’s better to be reproached, hated by men than to be disobedient to God.

Verses 18 *For behold, I have made you this day A fortified city and an iron pillar, And bronze walls against the whole land - Against the kings of Judah, Against its princes, Against its priests, And against the people of the land –* God will defend Jeremiah. Though threatened, no harm will come to him. Though kings, princes, and priests come against him, they will not prevail. God is with Jeremiah.

Verse 19 - *They will fight against you, But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you,” says the Lord, “to deliver you.”* All will fight against Jeremiah, but the will not win. God is with him.,

Though God protected Jeremiah, it didn’t mean he did not suffer. Jeremiah suffered. God says He prefers Obedience to Sacrifice. With Obedience comes suffering and sacrifice. We leave Jeremiah tonight just as he is getting started. Over the next 40 years, he’ll plead with Judah to repent and turn back. He’ll be ignored, though he was faithful. We likewise must understand that faithfulness and obedience doesn’t mean immunity from suffering. God is with us. They will not prevail. But they will fight. We must remain faithful no matter the source of the resistance.