

Good morning. My name is Karin Kennedy Hejmanowski and I'm glad to be here with you. My family and I have been here among you for a little bit over a year, but most often sit near the back, so I'm probably more familiar with your hair clips and hair cuts than your faces!

Before moving here, I served a PC(USA) church in the California Bay Area for seventeen years as an Associate Pastor. My husband and daughter had another commitment today. His name is Ken and she's an eighth grader named Hope who looooves horses! My 16 year old is Josiah and he enjoys rock climbing, driving autocross, and working at Auto Zone.

As for me, I like reading, espresso, conversations with friends, and non porous desserts. That is to say pie, not cake. Ice cream, not mousse.

Another thing I'm drawn to are the prophets. From the lectionary reading options for today...those are the prescribed daily readings that are a three year cycle through the scriptures...from those I chose the passage from Jeremiah. Jeremiah is one of the major prophets, so named merely because of the length of the book...the minor prophets are merely shorter books, not smaller impact people.

Being a prophet is not easy. I mean, being human isn't easy, but being a prophet is not for the light of heart. Regardless of whether they are read as literal historic stories or more as myths or tales intended for didactic purposes, the prophets

often had a rough role. Jonah was swallowed by a big fish. Hosea was called to marry a woman he knew was unfaithful. And Jeremiah? Well, he was often bringing hard messages when other prophets were preaching soft messages. When we find him in this passage, he's not free and footloose. He's confined because . . . well, because the enemies of his home kingdom are attacking the capital and the king didn't like Jeremiah's message that the kingdom would indeed be conquered, so his king has confined him. No one really likes being confined.

In this passage, we're confronted with a cultural practice referred to as the law of redemption. These things are not completely unknown in our day. Over the past couple of years, we've found ourselves involved with horses. And to my surprise, I've learned that when someone sells a horse, it's often in the contract that if the new owner sells the horse, the person they bought it from has first right of refusal to buy the horse back. And culturally, that's a little like what's going on in this passage. Because of family and legal structure, Jeremiah has the first right of refusal.

From the context, it's pretty clear that without the words from God in the dream, he would have declined the privilege of buying this parcel. It's in an area being attacked by the enemy, for goodness' sake. It's going to be conquered. It is not a good investment. He may literally never be able to go to it, let alone build on it or live on it. But the directive from God through a dream is very clear. So he

buys it. And he does it publicly and records it. It's not a private statement...it's a public action. In fact, because he's confined, he can't go see the ancient equivalent of the notary public or the banker or realtor. Lacking Zoom, they all have to come to him.

Furthermore, when the transaction is complete, he directs the deed to be stored in such a way that the record will be kept for a long time to come. The record will outlast the coming occupation. By buying this tract of land, he is making a statement in front of the nation that things are going to be different. It's an action based in hope and proclaiming hope. It's a statement of intention and hope.

For me, as I read of ancient prophets, I'm brought to wonder who are the prophets of our day? Remember that while prophets sometimes brought messages of upcoming events that did indeed come to pass, they are not future tellers. They aren't looking into a crystal ball to foretell coming events. They are truth tellers. Their role is to say honest words. Sometimes their words were welcome. More often they were not. Always they were honest, regardless of cost to them personally. Like ending up confined against your will.

Prophetic words can have various consequences. One of the characteristic, but this characteristic certainly doesn't prove that one is a prophet, of course, is that

a prophet does not back down. Whether confined or taken off the air, a prophet persists in bringing words even when they are hard and unwanted or contested.

I think there are many people who bring prophetic words. And many more who think they do. A prophet can have a large audience or a very small one. But they are not characterized by an adherence to a literal interpretation of scripture. They are characterized by expressing and living into the values of the kingdom of God. A good and memorable synopsis of those values are expressed to us by several prophets, but perhaps two in particular. The prophet Micah when he tells us that what the Lord requires of us is to love mercy, to do justice, and to walk humbly with our God.

Another synopsis is found in the prophetic book of Isaiah which Jesus quotes in his very first sermon when he says in Luke 4, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recover of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

I think some of the most courageous prophets of our day have been given megaphones because of their deep intelligence, sharp wit, and incredible ability to communicate with humor. I hold Jimmy Kimmel, Stephen Colbert, and Jon Stewart to be such voices. I find it interesting that all three hold or held faith as an important part of their lives. Jon Stewart no longer professes faith, but long

held to a Jewish expression of faith. Jimmy Kimmel is Catholic and Stephen Colbert is very active in his Catholic faith. And I give thanks for all three.

There are other prophetic voices, of course. If you take a moment now, you can think of those you are familiar with. Among these we might name Rachel Maddow or Jen Psaki. We can think of Martin Luther King Jr. who shared his dream that we might join him in the fight against racism, the late John Lewis—he was the US Representative who always reminded people to “make good trouble, necessary trouble”. We are inspired by Desmond Tutu. We need such voices that use the megaphone that they have earned by the faithful bringing of hard words to keep us working for justice and for compassion. Just last week, we had Frances from the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon share in a minute for missions about how they support refugee resettlement and advocate for justice. Saying that we *will* settle refugees at a time when our nation is working hard to turn most people away is a prophetic and hope-filled statement.

This brings us to the next part. Not all of us can be prophets...but all of us can take prophetic actions. To do so is to make a statement of intention and hope not just with our words, but with our actions. When Jeremiah bought the parcel of land, he was living into the hope that things would someday be different. We need to *pull a Jeremiah* and choose to live in ways that proclaim hope.

It is unlikely that our act of hope will look like buying a parcel of land that is certain to drop in value. But let's think about ways that people express hope every day.

I've been looking around for such acts recently. An unexpected one came to me as I watched someone holding a sign asking for money or help at an intersection. It occurred to me that in that moment, that is an expression of hope. If we put aside--just for the sake of illustration—the very real and serious issues of human trafficking and manipulation—that ask for help can be seen as an action of hope—imagining that perhaps this day things can be different.

Or I've texted over the past months with a friend who lost their housing. We've been in touch while the family found places and friends to stay with until they could again get their own place. They put their mattresses and what they could fit into a storage unit. It's an act of hope, right? Setting the intention based on hope that they would again have a home. So as not to leave you hanging, they just got their keys to a new apartment and move in today!

How about us or our families? Starting a treatment plan to combat a disease is a statement of an intention to fight and the hope of a life free of disease. We move forward because there is a sense of hope within us. By following a treatment plan, we live into hope.

Here at Southminster Pres, you have been a people of hope time and time again when you post positions for staff or pastors. Each time that's an act of hope and an intention to continue as a community. You have done this time and time again over the decades and will do so again when Pastor Scott retires. Even in the midst of the sadness of saying goodbye, starting the search for a new pastor is an act of intention filled with hope.

We live into intentions by going about our business as others prepare for the rapture when scripture says such a time cannot be known by anyone.

We live into intentions for justice and compassion when we refuse to allow others to believe that we live in a war torn town, but rather we work to live in peace with all people.

Maybe like me, you find yourself wondering what hope looks like today. What actions we can take. Defined actions can feel elusive or enigmatic when you don't have a cousin coming and telling you what to do with a divinely inspired dream ahead of time. But there *are* things we can do. Prophetic and hope-filled actions that speak of our intentions to be people who do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

We can make choices. And in some ways we don't need a dream to give us direction because we have all of scripture pointing us in the right direction. We

can give toward those things that grant compassion and hope. We can follow some of our modern day prophets and join in prophetic acts. One of those could be the **No Kings** rally on October 18 happening in various locations.

Or perhaps you might prepare yourself for prophetic action to bring hope in our community by going through bystander training. In bystander training you learn how to stand with people who are being bullied or targeted in any way, with methods that decrease conflict and maintain the dignity of the people being harassed. Such training is available online through an organization called **righttobe.org** There are trainings that focus on standing with immigrants, standing with our Asian community, and much more. Even learning how to de-escalate conflict in a protest setting. There's a session available as soon as tomorrow afternoon.

Take a deep breath. In. Out. We need hope, don't we. And sometimes we're not quite sure how to hold on to hope ourselves let alone offer it to others. Which is one of many reasons we gather in a space like this. To remind one another that we are a people of hope. Together we live into hope and encourage one another to listen to the prophets that reflect the words of Micah—justice, mercy, walking humbly. And the words of Isaiah and Jesus—bringing good news to the poor, freedom to the captive, sight to the blind and setting free the oppressed.

Jeremiah bought a parcel of land. It was a bold act. It even looked like a foolish act. But it wasn't foolish. It was hopeful. I am confident we can find ways to act in hope. In the days to come, I hope you'll notice tiny and huge ways you see people acting with Hope. And do the same. Find ways to live into hope. And invite others along. And share with others just how it was that you . . . pulled a Jeremiah!

Amen.