

HOW CAN YOU COMPETE WITH HORSES?

Jeremiah 12.1-6

The puzzle is why so many people live so badly. Not so wickedly, but so inanely. Not so cruelly, but so stupidly. There is little to admire and less to imitate in the people who are prominent in our culture. We have celebrities, but not saints. Famous entertainers amuse a nation of bored insomniacs. Infamous criminals act out the aggressions of timid conformists. Petulant and spoiled athletes play games vicariously for lazy and apathetic spectators. People, aimless and bored, amuse themselves with trivia and trash.

If, on the other hand, we look around for what it means to be a mature, whole, blessed person, we don't find much. These people are around, maybe as many of them as ever, but they aren't easy to pick out.

A Thirst for Wholeness

All the same, we continue to have an unquenchable thirst for wholeness; a hunger for righteousness.

A Quest for the Best

In our studies in the book of Jeremiah, we are selecting the biographical parts and reflecting on them personally and pastorally in the context of present, everyday life. Every one of us needs to be stretched to live at our best, awakened out of dull moral habits, shaken out of petty and trivial busy-work. Jeremiah can do that for us.

Competing with Horses

There is a memorable passage concerning Jeremiah's life when, worn down by the opposition and absorbed in self-pity, he was about to capitulate. He was ready to abandon his unique calling by God and settle for being a Jerusalem statistic. At that critical moment, he heard the reprimand:

*"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?"* Jeremiah 12.5

I am only a Child

God asked Jeremiah to do something he couldn't do. Naturally, he refused. If we are asked to do something that we know that we cannot do, it is foolish to accept the assignment for it soon becomes an embarrassment to everyone.

*"Ah, Sovereign LORD,' I said, 'I do not know how to speak; **I am only a child.**"*

But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

*"Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today **I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall** to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD." Jeremiah 1.6-8, 17-19*

How did Jeremiah make the transition from the shuffling, excuse-making, "Ah, Sovereign LORD, **I am only a child**" to the "**fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall**?"

The two visions, the blossoming almond branch and the pot of boiling water, were the instructive tools that gave Jeremiah's life balance (Jeremiah 1.11-16).

The first vision convinced Jeremiah that the word of God bursts with wonders and that its wonders are not illusions. The second vision convinced Jeremiah that the world is very dangerous, but that the danger is not catastrophic.