

Jeremiah 3:14-17

For the next few weeks our first reading will draw from the Book of the prophet Jeremiah. A little background will be helpful to better understand this book.

Jeremiah is sometimes called the “weeping prophet.” He began preaching around 627 B.C., a time when the Jewish faith was extremely weak. Jeremiah experienced rejection more than any other prophet. In some sense, he foreshadows our Lord Jesus Christ.

He preached for 40 years to his people with very little success. Just imagine a priest giving homilies for 40 years and his parishioners still don't like him!

The book is essentially a collection of Jeremiah's sermons and poems of Jeremiah's preaching. According to tradition, Baruch compiled all of Jeremiah's poems and preaching into the book we have today.

Jeremiah is a fairly long book: 52 chapters. Chapters 1-24 are a collection of Jeremiah's writings before the exile. In these chapters, you hear that Israel has broken its covenant with God. That is, they have adopted the worship of the Canaanite gods by building shrines all over the land.

Additionally, in these chapters Jeremiah accuses the leaders of corruption. There is rampant social injustice in that the most vulnerable and weak (e.g., widows, orphans, immigrants) are being exploited.

In chapters 26-45, we hear the last minute warnings before the fall of Jerusalem, coupled with a glimmer of hope. Chapters 30-33 in this section are sometimes called the “Book of Consolation.” They provide a glimmer of hope that God will heal their rebellion and gives glimpses of a “new covenant” that God will make them after they return.

We hear many of the themes of the entire book in today's reading. Jeremiah invites them to return to the Lord. He says God will give them new shepherds. And we also see the glimmer of hope in that all the nations will again be gathered to the Lord after their exile.

In short, while Jeremiah challenges them strongly, he also provides hope and healing. God's promises and love will ultimately prevail!