



Reflection on Jeremiah 4: The Great Reveal

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At the core of the prophet Jeremiah's understanding of God and the universe is the first creation story. It is by God's power that the earth was made. It is by God's wisdom that the world was established. It is by God's understanding the heavens were stretched out. Jeremiah makes those statements in one of our Scripture verses today as if there is a rival to those claims. Someone or some *thing* is not even blinking at the limits and the boundaries God has set, but, instead, either believes God does not see, God does not care, or assumes that their own decisions, actions, and judgments are righteous because God has pre-ordained it to be so. Out-of-control power is threatening and destroying a safe, viable, and fruitful place for human habitation.

As the ruler and his advisors, the nation, and the religious figures continue to exceed necessary boundaries and limits, creation is undone. In Jeremiah chapter 4, creation returns to its original chaos. The land becomes waste and void. Instability, evidenced by quaking and moving, is unleashed. The word "all" is used repeatedly (all the hills, all the birds, all the cities) to say that nothing will be spared, nothing will be held back, nothing guaranteed.

That is characteristic of the prophet's voice throughout Scripture. They are apocalyptic. The prophet always knows that the world cannot remain as it is, as it has become institutionalized, and be faithful. It all has to come down. Miriam sings of the entire Egyptian war machine thrown into the Sea, into the chaos. Mary of Nazareth sings of scattering the proud, bringing them down from their thrones and lifting up the lowly, a total upheaval.

The literal meaning of apocalyptic is to reveal or unmask. Jeremiah, the boy, at the beginning of God's call to him, is asked to see what is being revealed. As Biblical theologian Ched Myers has written:

[Apocalyptic] has to do with a kind of vision that is able to see through the dominant stories of empire—the grand fictions of entitlement and sovereignty, militaristic triumphalism, seductive myths of grandeur, and severe orthodoxies of law and order. Apocalyptic seeks to lift what Morpheus, in the 1999 film The Matrix, describes as “the world that has been pulled over our eyes”: the propaganda of empire that masks the truth, distorts what it means to be human, and hijacks history. Apocalyptic, in contrast, seeks a “double unmasking,” by:

stripping away the layers of denial and delusion that keep us distracted, in order to expose realities of personal and political suffering and injustice—that is, to see the world as it really is from the perspective of the poor and victims of violence; and then transfusing our dulled and dumbed-down imaginations with visions of the world as it really could and should be from the perspective of divine love and

justice. The possibilities of a different way of being are revealed, or at least glimpsed, in apocalyptic visions.

As prophets of our own age, we are tasked to develop our own apocalyptic, revealing visions from the perspective of divine love and justice. See. No. Look harder.

A great revealing or uncovering is taking place. What we should have known before is being unmasked in ways that we cannot deny. Body cams or dash cams show people of color walking away without weapons being gunned down. Children are stripped from their parents and the records lost. Stories of rampant sexual harassment, abuse, and violence are ignored so that a “good, white family man” may go forward. Our country is supplying the military wherewithal to fuel the greatest humanitarian crisis on the planet. And we are easing restrictions, rolling back standards, and continuing practices that send us barreling towards climate change. Once again, we are preparing the way for an economic collapse that will certainly devastate the poorest of the poor and drive many of us to the brink with the loss of savings, health care, and retirement. And what we already knew is that the leader of our nation was not the self-made lie but earned his money, as Jesus implied with the rich, young ruler, through inheritance and fraud. These are not new truths. These were long known but now they are beginning to emerge from assumed institutional health as deformities, cracked cisterns, wicked cruelty and evil. They were all hiding in plain sight.

The great reveal is happening in other ways too—in the ways that the Spirit moves. Children and youth bring a lawsuit against their government to challenge its policies on climate change. Jewish youth and 90 year-old nuns are led away from the Capitol rotunda in handcuffs because they stand against family separation and children in detention camps. Elders with canes and wheelchairs refuse to yield on sacred mountains. Buddhist monks, Native people, and people of Japanese ancestry refuse to yield outside of Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma, so that it did not once again become a detention center. The Spirit is moving . . . hovering . . . so that the necessary boundaries and limits against chaos might remain.

Tara Houska and Julian Brave NoiseCat remind us that Creator is working through Native people as protectors and partners to draw limits and boundaries for this good earth.

First Nations relatives are fighting TransMountain tar sands.

Lakota relatives held off Keystone XL tar sands many times. They fight still.

Anishinaabe relatives are fighting against Line 3 tar sands.

Sámi relatives are defending Lapland.

And so much more.

Indigenous peoples are rising.

Our Hawaiian relatives are protecting Mauna Kea.

Our Maori cousins are standing up at Ihumātao.

Our coastal brothers and sisters are gathering in Lummi for the 30th canoe journey.

You may not be paying attention, but we are changing the world.