

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Jeremiah 11:18–20**

**Sermon: Misleading**

In the text for today, God reveals a particularly nasty plot. As Jeremiah preaches the harsh message to Judah, they desire to kill him and wipe his memory from the face of the earth. Fortunately, God reveals the plot to Jeremiah, and it is foiled.

The ball is snapped. He drops back, mere seconds to scan the field and find the open receiver while defensive linemen and a linebacker or two are closing fast. The pocket is a precarious place! A quarterback can see the rush in front of him, but he can't see behind. This is why, to go with a right-handed quarterback, the left tackle is one of the highest-paid players on an NFL team—to protect the quarterback's blind side.

One famous NFL player who played left tackle is Michael Oher, who grew up homeless in Tennessee. After being rescued by the Tuohy family, he entered a Christian school where he learned to play football and ultimately received a scholarship to play for the University of Mississippi.

His NFL career includes playing for the Ravens, the Titans, and the Panthers. You may remember the 2009 movie *The Blind Side* about Oher and the amazing Christian family that changed his life. Oher is tough and strong. More important, he's loyal. He'll do just about anything humanly possible to protect his quarterback's blind side.

If only the prophet Jeremiah had had a left tackle to protect his blind side!

We turn our attention to a short account in the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah is often called the weeping prophet because, while he brings God's judgment of impending doom to Judah, he deeply loves the people and continually weeps over them. Unfortunately, today we learn that while Jeremiah loves Judah, the people of Judah don't necessarily love him back. Jeremiah experienced perhaps one of the biggest blindsides in all of the Old Testament. In these three verses, we learn about a plot against Jeremiah and how he once was almost killed. We also learn that God was watching out for his weepy prophet.

The Book of Jeremiah can be difficult it's mostly poetry and prophecy. But today's reading is neither. It's an aside. You've probably noticed in a movie or a play that there are times when the character turns away from the action and speaks directly to the audience or into the camera. This technique is called an "aside."

This is what Jeremiah appears to be doing. In previous verses, Jeremiah is revealing the Word of the Lord, but then a shift in writing takes place. It's as if he turns away from the prophecy and toward the reader to describe this plot against him. ***"I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not know it was against me they devised schemes"*** (v 19a).

Jeremiah was proclaiming God's Word, but his listeners didn't like it. They were working behind the scenes to silence him. This is not just any attack, for Jeremiah describes his attackers as wanting to ***"destroy the tree with its fruit, . . . cut him off from the land of the living"***—***wipe out his very existence—"that his name be remembered no more"*** (v 19b). This isn't just death. It's total annihilation.

The very curious thing is that somehow our emotional prophet didn't see it coming. It wasn't until God revealed the plot that Jeremiah was even aware. He was like "a gentle lamb" without a clue as to the slaughter that was about to happen. He was blindsided.

Why did Jeremiah get caught with a blind side? He doesn't reveal additional details. But we can deduce a few things from his life. He was from the same hometown as his listeners and probably felt a sense of camaraderie with them. He also dearly loved Judah and had great compassion toward them that surely they would have noticed. But maybe he was blindsided by the plot against him because he believed they would understand he was only the messenger! In either event, he didn't see it coming.

This is the horrible danger of a blind side. If we could go into the future and look back in time, it would be easy to see where we missed the signals. But that's the problem with a blind side. It's what former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld used to call "an unknown unknown." We simply don't see it coming.

Why are we constantly unaware of our blind side? It's likely because we think more highly of our abilities than we should. We know our own hearts and minds, and they seem to us to be relatively reasonable. We trust our own instincts. Here insert examples of ways we each might rely on our abilities and our judgment rather than trusting God to protect us.

But we should know from experience and from Scripture that the human condition is full of sin and can't be trusted. Even though we are trusting in our own minds and hearts, we are trusting in minds and hearts that are in a fallen condition. There's no way at all to protect ourselves from our blind side. It's part of the human condition after the fall.

This story ends well for Jeremiah. It appears that God was protecting his prophet. After God reveals the plan to Jeremiah, the slaughter is abated, and Jeremiah is saved. Our reading for today doesn't explain how God revealed the plot and how the slaughter was avoided.

In later verses, Jeremiah reveals that God punished his potential attackers, but even these details are few.

One should note, however, what Jeremiah writes as he sings the praises of God in v 20: ***“But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously . . . to you have I committed my cause.”***

When Jeremiah looks back at the whole affair, he realizes that it all stemmed from an incorrect judgment of his heart. Those who plotted against Jeremiah reacted only to what they heard. They couldn't know what was in Jeremiah's heart. Jeremiah, too, only knew what was in his heart and mind, but couldn't see beyond that. It is only an omnipotent God who is able to see the whole picture and judge with righteousness.

You see, God is never blindsided. When he looks at us, he sees the parts of us that none of us can see. He sees the dangers long before we ever do. He is the God of “known knowns.” He sees the impact of our sinful nature, and he sees the folly when we trust in our own judgments.

We may think that we know everything about ourselves, but that is folly. God knows everything. And when God looked at our lives, he saw our complete and utter failure to see our own weaknesses.

It is for that reason that he sent us a Savior. He sent Jesus into the world to redeem us from all the times that by trusting in our own sinful nature we've walked into a blind spot.

Like Jeremiah, Jesus was a hometown boy; he had great compassion for those around him, and he spoke God's truth to them. Jesus' listeners plotted to kill him, too, and they succeeded, having him nailed to a cross. But this plot was foiled as well, as Jesus broke through the chains of death, rising from the grave, to set us free. Jesus' death and resurrection have delivered us from the sins we know and the ones we don't.

By ourselves, we cannot protect our blind side. We will be constantly plagued by the fact that we cannot see our unknown unknowns. But these will not kill us because we have one who walks near and behind.

His righteousness has been given to us. And God's righteousness protects us despite our blind sides. Through his grace, for Jesus' sake, we have been judged righteous.

In his name. Amen