

Introduction

- *(Image: busy station)*
- Used to travel on "Blue trains" in Glasgow regularly
- Normal journey involved trying to catch a train at Queen St low level at around 8:20am:
 - just as everyone else is arriving in the centre of the City for work, and getting off the trains on the low level platforms!
 - if your connection was a wee bit late.... running to catch your train... hear it pull in, belting to get down the stairs... flood of people coming off the train, going in the opposite direction... pushing through the crowd... train pulls out leaving you alone on the platform!
- *Its hard work going against the flow, being out of step with everyone around you!*
 - that was Jeremiah's experience - and there are some important lessons we can learn from him as we begin a new session of following and serving Jesus together

Jeremiah is out of step with official propaganda

- *(Image: newspapers)*
- Things were bad in Jerusalem:
 - Babylonian siege ramps; army surrounding city...
- King Zedekiah thought he needed a prophet like Moses, or Elijah, who would encourage the people, remind them that nothing is impossible for God
 - that was the party line, the appropriate spin
- But that wasn't what Jeremiah was saying!!
 - *"God is going to hand you over to the Babylonian king!"* (v.3,4)
 - (and he'd been imprisoned by the king for his troubles!!)
- We've got to accept being out of step with official propaganda:
 - homosexuality?
 - employment of Christians / non-discrimination?
 - superiority of marriage?
 - openness and honesty - politicians and straight answers!!
 - I remember seeing a news snippet about a railway complainant who got back a refreshingly honest answer from the company he'd written to, admitting that the service between the two stations was "rubbish"! - *it sticks in the mind because it is out-of-step with the norm...*
- It may not be comfortable - *or to our advantage* - and it may not always be easy to discern exactly when to make an issue of it - *but as Christians we will find ourselves out of step with our culture, our world...*

Jeremiah is out of step with the economic cycle

- *(Image: credit crunch warning triangle)*
- Credit Crunch is the big news just now
 - banks are weak, jobs are going....
 - buying into a bank just now would seem foolhardy, out of step with the economic cycle, rash...
- *That was exactly the kind of thing Jeremiah was doing:*
 - he had cash available, stuff he could use to buy food (inflated prices; siege), could transport to wherever he was taken...
 - most people didn't see a secure future - deportation was the likely outcome of their current situation;
 - *so buying a field was madness!*
- **BUT**
 - God told Jeremiah to buy - so he buys
 - as he does so, he sees in his actions a message of hope for the people around him...
 - ... once again there will be security, plans for the future, though seems so distant just now!

- Often, as God's people, we should be out of step with the economic drive of our world:
 - not out to accumulate, to acquire - but to love, to give, to care;
 - and so God's priorities should affect our financial decisions - housing, pension, what's on our shopping lists
- Fair Trade week - priority given to the producer, rather than consumer:
 - we say we care about justice, about the poor - do our words match our bank statements and shopping trolleys?
- Or Tithing:
 - we say God is first in our lives... is his proportion of our income first, or last, when it comes to counting out the pennies each week or each month?

Jeremiah is out of step with everyone else

- *(Image: apart from the crowd)*
- The net result of all of this was that Jeremiah was overjoyed to discover that God had a long term plan for the good of Judah, for the good of his people;
 - everyone else only sees the short term disaster around their walls
- *And so Jeremiah was basically "out of step" with everyone around him!*
- That same emotional "out of step"ness is likely still to be the experience of Christians today:
 - we look at the world around us, and truly see the disaster that is happening;
 - *many of our contemporaries look at our transient, glitzy sham of a world and seek fun and fulfilment there;*
 - however, despite seeing clearly the true depth of the disaster sin is, we have a hope for the future, in God's hand; we don't think that enjoying life now is the be all and end all of existence!
 - *many around us have no hope, or a hope that is grounded in nothing of substance*

Challenge:

- Is our experience of life as a Christian one of being often out of step with the world around us?
 - if not, why not?