

Jeremiah Was A Bullfrog

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When I first looked at the reading for today, I was feeling a trifle frivolous and the song “Jeremiah was a bullfrog” sprang to mind. On reflection, it wasn’t totally inappropriate.

*Jeremiah was a bullfrog; he was a good friend of mine
I never understood a single word he said
But I helped him drink his wine
He always had some mighty fine wine.*

There is a strong school of thought that Jeremiah wasn’t an actual person, but rather an amalgam of several people. There are several justifications for this argument:

- There is no record of Jeremiah outside of the Bible – which is strange, given that he is a powerful character **in** the Bible.
- The parts of the Bible attributed to him (Jeremiah, Kings and Lamentations) differ markedly in style.
- There was a very strong relationship between him and the Shaphan family and their Scribal school in Jerusalem.
- Jeremiah has just too many parallels to Moses to be ignored.

Also, based on the history, it seems that the Israelites didn’t understand a single word that he said – but that doesn’t make his wine (prophesies and preaching as recorded) any less meaningful. And he had some mighty fine wine, starting with today’s reading.

We are told that Jeremiah tried to resist God’s call by pointing out that he was only a child and he didn’t know how to speak. But God wasn’t buying that, insisting that Jeremiah go forth and speak. He touched Jeremiah’s mouth to place the word of the Lord there.

And it seems that Jeremiah hit the ground running. He is described as being well trained and fully literate from his earliest preaching.

He preached and prophesied throughout Israel. He

- condemned idolatry,
- the greed of priests, and
- false prophets.

So, despite his initial reluctance, Jeremiah became a preacher and a prophet. And he was neither the first nor the last person in history to wind up doing something that they hadn’t really planned.

I thought that I might try a little quiz to keep you on your toes:

Do you recognise this person?



- Born 1926
- Ambulance driver during the war
- Princess of York

As the first born of the Duke of York, **Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor** was effectively the “heir to the spare”. The 1920’s equivalent of today’s Princess Beatrice. But suddenly, in 1936 when she was just ten years old, her Uncle Edward abdicated, and her father became King George VI. In one moment, her childhood was stripped away, and she became heir presumptive.

King George died at 57, leaving her as queen at just 26.

Despite that baptism of fire, you would have to be a pretty harsh critic to say that **Queen Elizabeth II** has done a bad job.

How about this one?



Let me give you a few clues:

- Born in 1936
- He trained as a chemical technician and worked in the food industry.
- He was also a bar bouncer.
- And a pretty hot tango dancer.
- **Jorge Mario Bergoglio** is more commonly known by his assumed name **Pope Francis**

When he was 19, he went to confession and was inspired by the priest. We will never know what he had in mind when he signed up to become a Jesuit, but from day one he was a rebel.

He lived in tumultuous political times and he risked his life several times to save people who were just one step ahead of the junta.

He was also a rebel in the church, even marrying people whom the catholic church refused to. He upset many of his peers by refocussing the church’s spending and being an advocate for the poor.

At the conclave where Pope Benedict XVI was elected, Jorge specifically asked the other cardinals NOT to vote for him in order to break the deadlock.

But in 2013 he became pope anyway.

Once again, you would have to be a pretty harsh critic to say that **Pope Francis** is not doing an excellent job.

What about this one?



- Born in 1954 with the surname Kasner
- Her father was a Lutheran pastor.
- She has a doctorate in quantum chemistry.
- Worked as a research scientist
- She grew up in Perleberg in East Germany.
- She entered politics in 1989
- Became Chancellor of Germany in 2005

Angela Dorothea Merkel has been widely described as the de facto leader of the European Union and the most powerful woman in the world.

Once again, you would have to be a pretty harsh critic to say that she has done a bad job.

I do not know if any of the above ever asked for divine help, but I really do believe that God has put words into their mouths on many occasions.

And this brings me to my final point. God does not require our cooperation in order to use us for His divine purposes. Of course, it is so much nicer and easier if we do ask His blessing and we go along willingly but let us never forget that God is so much bigger and more powerful than us.

Allow me to digress briefly.

We know that The Exodus happened because there are ex-Biblical accounts of it. But what did actually happen?

I recently watched an excellent documentary on the science behind The Exodus. While there are some who would disagree with the researchers' findings, I found them more than plausible.

It seems that there was a massive – and I mean MASSIVE, as in a thousand times more powerful than a nuclear bomb - volcanic eruption on the island of Santorini in 1621 BC. This would have accounted for all but the very last of the plagues scientifically. One minor problem however, fallout from a volcano does not kill people selectively!

It was only when one of the researchers tumbled to the fact that in the Egyptian culture of the day, the first-born son was regarded as so precious that if there was insufficient food to go around, he would be fed, and the rest of the family would starve. Unfortunately, the volcanic ash had poisoned what few crops had survived. So, it turns out that their own parents were inadvertently feeding poison to their first-born sons!

Some might say that by explaining the science, you have negated the “miracle”. I would say that commanding nature to do His bidding just emphasises the omnipotence of Almighty God.

There are many present-day volcanologists who would give their eye-teeth to know how, 3½ thousand years ago, without the aid of any modern-day scientific equipment, Moses was able to predict, not only THAT the eruption would occur but WHEN and WHERE! Furthermore, he got the very specific TYPE of eruption right and he knew what the results would be in the right order. Even down to the first-born sons. I would answer them with one word. God.

God told Jeremiah: *“Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you. Then the Lord put out His hand and touched his mouth; and the Lord said to him, “Now I have put my words in your mouth.”*

So, where am I going with all this? Blatant advertising.

In a few weeks' time, St Ronan's will be holding its AGM.

If history is anything to go by, round about now, Sandy will be asking (nay begging) for volunteers to keep the wheels of this church turning.

- There are big jobs and there are small jobs that need to be done.
- There are jobs that require great skills and there are jobs that do are easy peasy.
- There are jobs that fit right into your skill sets and there are jobs that you have never tried.

Lilibet, Jorge and Angela didn't say "“Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to do this, for I am only a – whatever”".

Find out what needs to be done, be brave, volunteer and have faith.

If you ask His help, He will put touch your mouth and your hands.

Amen