

## Plans to give Hope – Jeremiah 29:10-14

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Talk by Ian Baldwin, Prayers by Hazel Willson

Hello and welcome to St John's. My name is Ian Baldwin and today we will be looking at Jeremiah and God's plans to give us hope.

We will begin our time together with a confession and then Val will read from Jeremiah before I speak. After the talk Hazel will lead us in prayer before I close.

Let us take a moment to gather our thoughts – to be still before God and call to mind those things we have done which were untrue, unkind or hurtful.

*Lord, we are sorry for the things we have done deliberately or through carelessness and ask your help to live a life closer to you. We ask again for your forgiveness. For God says "I, even I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and remembers your sins no more".*

*Thank you that you are a God of new beginnings. Amen.*

Val will now bring us our reading:

Today's reading is taken from Jeremiah 29 v 10-14

"This is what the Lord says "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you" declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity." I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Thank you Val

Jeremiah had a hard and challenging message. The weeping prophet had a lot of doom and gloom but his message from God also has rays of sunshine that break through the gloom.

In chapter 24 God says "My eyes watch over them for their good. I will build them up. I will plant them, I will give them a heart to know me. They will be my people and I will be their God for they will return to me with all their heart."

In chapter 32 "I will give them singleness of heart and action."

"I will make an everlasting covenant with them. I will never stop doing good to them."

"I will rejoice in doing them good,"

We have to remember that Israel was in exile in Babylon and a remnant was left in Jerusalem.

To those living in Babylon the message was to settle down and wait quietly for deliverance for rescue. But there were unease, mutiny and rebellion and false prophets giving messages people wanted to hear to satisfy their itching ears that's why Jeremiah's message was so hard.

Have you thought about this before? God thinks about you.

God thinks about us and towards us.

"I have loved you with an everlasting love" Jeremiah 31 v3

We like to be thought about, especially by friends, we say "that was kind to think of us" or "wasn't it good to remember us". Well we have a great friend in Jesus and his Father thinks of us.

God's thoughts are directed to us. Isaiah 27 has a lovely picture; the image of planning, planting and nurturing a vineyard grown from seed to harvest.

To know that God thinks and cares for Israel must have been a comfort in exile when they couldn't go to the temple or worship as they would like. It should be a comfort to us when we can't go to church when we can't share the peace, the bread and wine or worship together.

But God's thoughts were of peace and return and they are the same for us.

We may not perceive or understand his thoughts, but we trust he knows what he is doing!

God's plans are decided, his mind is clear whereas we often don't know our mind. Do we fear God's plans are somehow against us? If we believe God is love, why should he be against us? God doesn't pander to our fears or fantasies but to the expectation of our faith, which is the end God promises and which is the best for us.

Our government is deciding and adjusting plans as it goes along because its knowledge and understanding is imperfect but not so God.

When you doubt he is faithful. When all is gloomy, he is still a glorious light of hope.

His ways are constant, and he keeps his promises forever and that is why we can place our hope in him.

When Moses led Israel out of Egypt, he didn't know the way, but God did.

It was, and still is, about trusting and following God.

And following God brings us peace.

God is at peace with us because of the atoning blood of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit brings peace to our troubled hearts and minds.

And just as God's plans are for our good, they are not for evil.

So don't believe the whisper that says God has done this evil to you. Remember God hates evil and sin, but he doesn't hate you. He loves you.

Trials will come to us often to help us grown and point us back to Him and to purify us – like refining fire melts iron ore into liquid and the impurities, the dross rises to the top and is skimmed off.

God does not want to grieve us but to save us, after all he gave His one and only Son for us.

God is working for our future.

The hard life of Babylon was preparing Israel for the future. Like a ploughed field is broken down so the seed can become the rich harvest.

If we are feeling troubled, remember, God wants the best for you and peace for you.

Now having thought about God's attitude to us, let's look at our attitude towards God.

Verses 12 and 13)

"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

We will have to submit to God which is an active not passive thing. It means coming to God without terms or conditions; admitting our sin and submitting to his mercy. Jesus prayed it and so must we.

The Lord rebukes and chastens those he loves just like any good parent. So why not submit to God who has done so much for us in Jesus Christ.

We should be hopeful. We have been taken from the darkness of not knowing God's love into his glorious light as children of God. We are called to a future with him with nothing to dread or fear.

We are not called to live a life in fear and frustration but rejoice in what we have in Christ.

It may not always be easy, but as they say "there is no gain without pain" and as we come to the point of saying "not my will but yours" then we find we are no longer fighting and resisting God but are free to enjoy him and serve him.

There is also an expectancy v 10 expect God to keep his promises to be as good to us as his word.

Therefore, know his word and his promises so no-one can lead you astray – like the false prophets – exaggerating and twisting God's word or the untrue whisper in your ear.

There is a hope of blessing. The Lord acknowledges their suffering and ours and he recognises his children and works for their good Romans 8 v28 quoted last week "we know that in all things God works for the good of those that love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Finally, prayer is enlivened. Trouble should not make us moaners but prayers. Many who do not acknowledge God cry out to him in time of trouble, how much more then should we as Christians cry to God. When we turn to God in prayer, he turns to us in mercy. But we do not cry in vain but rather in hope in him who has promised to hear us.

Jeremiah 24 "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people and I will be their God for they will return to me with all their heart.

We grow in his grace and mercy often through difficulties and adversity.

Let us live as people who are changed by degrees into better temples of the Holy Spirit – reflecting the light and love of Christ.

As we say "not my will by yours" and seek God with all our hearts and placing our hope in him. We will not be disappointed in the God who plans to give us a hope and a future.

Let's pray:

*Lord God, help us to earnestly seek you that we might find peace and hope for the future in the life, death and resurrection of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Now Hazel will lead us in our intercessions

Psalm 34 says: 'Glorify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears.....the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and He delivers them'

Father, we pray for your hurting world: O Lord, you are our refuge and our fortress – our God in whom we trust. Surely you will save us from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. You will cover us with your feathers, and under your wings we will find refuge. Thank you for the promises in your word that bring hope and comfort to all in danger, whether from violence or from virus, from persecution or from pain. Keep and protect all Christians who suffer oppression and discrimination, especially at this time, and all who are suffering from coronavirus or from its effects on jobs, income and daily life.

Father, we pray for the London City Mission, who celebrated 185 years of ministry yesterday. Thank you for all those men and women who have taken the love of Jesus to the least-reached people of this city, from the slums of Dickensian times, cholera outbreaks and dire poverty – to the modern, multi-ethnic, and even more needy, world city that is London today. We pray for new and changed methods of connecting with people who need to put their hope and trust in you, because they have no-one else.

Father, we have remembered this week the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, and we give you thanks for her trust in your call to serve others, and to make a difference in nursing – and for the passion with which she fulfilled that task. We see her legacy today in the care, skill, devotion and selflessness shown by our NHS and Care Workers in our hospitals and care homes – and we pray for everyone, including consultants, doctors, nurses, administrators, cleaners, porters, cooks and technicians; we pray your strength, protection and encouragement.

We pray too, Father, for those in the St John's family, or known to us, who need particular prayers or are unwell. We lift Bishop James to you, recovering from covid-19, and for Val Beckway, Tom Davies, Anthony Wedderburn, and Yvette, Emma and Kemi and their families.

We pray for Ian and Steve, in their task of being church wardens at this time of interregnum. Sustain them we pray. And we pray for CAP, as its work increases due to economic downturn. Be with Rachel, Lin and Gareth as they use new ways to communicate and help those struggling with debt – and thank you for the food bank contributions, now needed more than ever.

Help us Father, to remember that You care for us, and to keep our trust in You, whilst we help others.

Be still, my soul, the Lord is on thy side  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God, to order and provide,  
In every change He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul, thy best, thy heavenly friend  
through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake  
to guide the future, as He has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul, the waves and wind still know  
his voice, who ruled them while He dwelt below.

In You I rest, in You I find my hope,  
In You I trust, You never let me go.  
I place my life within Your hands alone.  
Be still, my soul. Amen

We confidently submit ourselves to Your will, as we say the prayer that Jesus taught

**Our Father in heaven  
Hallowed be Your name  
Your kingdom come  
Your will be done  
On earth as in heaven  
Give us today our daily bread  
Forgive us our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us  
Lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours  
Now and for ever, Amen.**

Thank you Hazel.

I would like to remind you that we have information on the website about our reflections, and to thank you for your continued support of the food bank.

Please stay in touch through our homegroups and regular newsletter which gives prayer requests and prayers answered as well as fun things like our quiz on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

A prayer to close based on Philipians

*We rely on God, for it is God who works in us to will and act in order to fulfil his good purposes and may the peace of God which transcends all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

**Amen**