

# Jeremiah 33

Has there been a time in your life when you have made a decision that others around you would consider to be unwise given your current circumstances. Perhaps right now, for many, the thought of foreign travel plans in 2021 would appear inconceivable and unwise given the current circumstances and the possibility of disappointment, lengthy quarantine and cancelled arrangements and yet we hold on to the belief that one day, this will all be possible again.

Sometimes though, we make decisions despite our circumstances because we feel led by God to do so.

I think of the young woman from Croydon who boarded a ship with only a £10 note in her pocket and prayed for God to tell her when to leave the boat. When the boat pulled into Hong Kong in 1966 God told her to disembark and so she did. She made a lawless slum full of opium dens, gangs and prostitutes her home and has lived there ever since. Not something perhaps we would consider to be a wise choice in life for a young, single woman but she, Jackie Pullinger obeyed and trusted and believed that God had plans for her life that she couldn't see at the time.

Well, I want to begin this morning with something that Jeremiah does just before our reading of chapter 33 that may also seem a fairly unwise decision given his circumstances. Whilst being confined in the courtyard of the palace guard, Jeremiah buys a field just outside Jerusalem. We need to bear in mind at this point that the city has been under siege for a year, and anything that has been growing in that field is likely to have been destroyed by occupying soldiers trampling it down, so it's pretty worthless, but nevertheless, Jeremiah buys the land. Why? Because his cousin who we assume is in debt visits him and persuades him to buy the land from him in a type of kinsman redeemer way so that the land stays within the family. Luckily for the cousin, God knows this is going to happen and tells Jeremiah to go ahead and buy the land when his cousin approaches him with the deal.

Jeremiah looks to God and trusts His word instead of looking at the current circumstances and thinking this is a dreadful investment considering the field is in ruin and the land is about to be taken over by the Babylonians.

Trust is not easy and yet we see throughout the bible that God wants us to trust in Him even when our current situations seem far from perfect.

Moses and David had to trust God even when their circumstances looked incredibly bleak.

Noah had to trust God enough to build an ark way before the rains came.

Jeremiah is demonstrating his trust in God's promises that one day he will bring his people back and Jerusalem will be restored. He trusts God so much that he buys a worn out patch of land as a down payment if you like that he truly believed God would one day bring His people back to work the land and to live there one day.

Jeremiah invests in a future he cannot yet see.

And so as we move through into Chapter 33, we read that Jeremiah is still confined to the courtyard of the palace guards where they can keep an eye on him when God speaks to him again and reminds him that he only has to call to God and God would answer and not only will he answer but he will tell of great and unsearchable things Jeremiah does not yet know. God knows the answers to things we cannot yet see, he sees the full picture, he sees things from a different perspective. He doesn't just see our current circumstances as we do, he sees beyond, to a time not yet in our grasp, in our view.

One of my favourite programmes was Restoration Man where George Clark would meet people who had bought up dilapidated buildings that no one else would touch in order to do them up. They didn't just see the building as it currently was, they saw beyond that, to a new horizon, to a time when, with some tender loving care and a lot of hard work, the building would be restored to its former glory and often with even more to offer those who lived there.

God knows that Jerusalem will soon be in ruin, and he will allow that to happen because it is the consequence of their continual sinful lives. BUT he also knows that the days are coming when he will restore his people, he will bring health and healing, he will allow his people to have abundant peace and security. He knows that restoration comes after destruction, that mercy and grace flow after justice has been served. We see the pinnacle of that expression of justice and mercy coming together when we look at Jesus on the cross.

God will cleanse his people and forgive them for all that they have done wrong so that once more the city of Jerusalem will shout with joy and praise for their God that will ring out over all the nations heralding who the God of Israel really is.

God says to Jeremiah in effect 'You see a desolate city, yet I hear the sound of joy and gladness once more, you see a wasteland but I see green pastures for shepherds to rest their flocks.

These chapters 30-33 are often called the Book of Consolation as their main purpose is to bring hope and comfort to the despairing exiles. These chapters as

Roger said last week, do not change the facts of what is going to happen which are that Jerusalem is about to be taken by the Babylonians and all the people will become captives and sent into exile. But they do change the way the people respond to their circumstances. They speak of trusting a God with a future that right now does not seem possible but that He can work through situations in His timing. The God of Israel is a God of Restoration.

In verse 14, God says, 'The days are coming when I will fulfil the promise I made to Israel and to Judah', not only will he bring them back from captivity but he will love them, forgive them, restore them geographically and materially as well as spiritually, because this is a promise about restored relationships as well as restored people and restored land.

It's about trusting the promises of God, that they continue to stand despite the apparent circumstances. The promises of God go far beyond the immediate, they transcend time and place, they endure forever.

Not only will there be a short-term fulfilment of the promises of God, when they return from exile and rebuild of the city of Jerusalem, but His promises go way beyond that.

Verse 15, 'In those days and at that time, I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line'. These words point to the time of Jesus. 'he will do what is just and right in the land'. God promises that David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel and that the tribe of Levi will always have a priest to offer sacrifices before God because of Jesus, who is the servant King and great High Priest forever. Christ fulfils the role of King and Great High Priest, he keeps constant fellowship with God and he intercedes on our behalf so that we too can be forgiven and restored people reconciled to God through Jesus. Jesus brought and continues to bring healing, security, peace, wholeness to all who trust in him.

We read in the story of the transfiguration how the disciples saw things from a different perspective up on that mountain top. They see Jesus for who he really is – the Messiah, God's own Son. The story reveals to us too that there is a whole other reality going on that we cannot yet fully see.

The good news of God's promises are ultimately found in the gospel spoken by Jesus and through his life, death and resurrection. Through Jesus' resurrection, God would bring about the restoration not just of agriculture and of people but the first fruits of a whole new creation.

And this whole new creation moves our perspective further out to the end times, an eschatological view when Christ will return and there will be a new creation. This is when God's promise of restoration is completely finished, when

finally, God and His people are fully restored in a relationship of perfect love, obedience and unity.

The church plays an important part in God's restoration plans, we are called to tell others of God's love for them and His promises for a future horizon. Just as he asked Jeremiah, God asks us, His children, His disciples, to invest in an almost inconceivable future. We are called to love the lost, to house the homeless to feed the hungry, to bring restoration in all sorts of ways to all sorts of people. Richard is going to be speaking to Andy in this service about the Greenhouse. A project that we believe and trust is part of God's plan for Fetcham. We have some idea as to what we can provide through the building but only God knows the full impact the Greenhouse may eventually have further down the road. Who knows what God will do in and through that place that may bring restoration to our young people, to families, to those who are lonely and feel isolated. Right now we can only imagine as we look at plans on pieces of paper but I believe God already knows the full picture of all that place might be, if we will only trust Him.

As we close our sermon series on Jeremiah I want to quote from one of the commentators 'let us see with eyes of faith, the vision of an ultimate future beyond even the final judgment, the vision of an everlasting covenant, of a people enjoying the undiluted goodness of God, a people pardoned, purified and planted by God. That is the future promised by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, accomplished by the cross and resurrection of His Son, guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. That is the future that is ours to contemplate now by the faith that is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'. That is the future, 'the real estate' to which God holds the title deeds. That is the land purchased with a price infinitely more than Jeremiah paid for his field'.

As we prepare to start our journey through Lent this coming week, may we trust in the promises of God and may we look beyond our current circumstances, to a time when we will hear again the sounds of joy and gladness and a time beyond that, when we will be fully restored in our relationship with God, forgiven and redeemed because of the one who is just and right, who reigns forever, our servant King and great high priest, Jesus Christ.

Amen