



Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15  
Part 5: The Politically Incorrect Prophet Jeremiah  
A Purchase of Hope  
WRCoB 7.11.21

Judith is from an area in Nigeria  
That has had minor skirmishes  
Between her people, the Irigwe

Which is mostly Christian farming people  
Whose small hamlets are nestled in the hills  
Of Western Plateau State

And the Fulani, the nomadic cattle herders  
Who travel the region in search of grass and water.

In previous years when the only weapons they had  
Were bows and arrows and spears  
Conflicts were few and much less volatile

But things have really changed for the worse.

Nowadays, with the support from Islamist terrorist groups  
The Fulani now carry illegally obtained modern weaponry.

What was once slight clashes between tribes  
It has now evolved into acts of terrorism.

Now, the Fulanis invade a village with their AK47s  
They shoot everyone in sight  
Killing men, women, and children.

They burn their stores of grain, their vehicles, and homes.

They have caused severe suffering  
In what is called the middle belt of Nigeria;

The demarcation between  
The Muslim North and the Christian South.

They are intent on extending  
Their power and territory farther south  
Due to desertification in the North  
Caused in part by climate change

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Even today, around Judith's hometown  
The crisis is ongoing.

So, it is all the more surprising  
That when relatives call on Judith  
Seeking to sell their land  
Due to economic hardships

She, for the most part, does not hesitate but buys it.

She does so to keep the land in the family.

But she also does so with the eventual hope that one day  
We will build a home there  
And spend some of our golden years  
Basking in the African sun, eating mangoes.

This is the same hope God gave to Jeremiah  
When God instructed Jeremiah to buy his cousin's farm  
In the middle of Babylon's siege of Jerusalem.

Today, we backtrack just a little.

In our last Scripture Lesson, we witnessed  
Jeremiah writing a letter to the exiles in Babylon

The siege was over  
And many people were sent into exile in Babylon.

Today's text takes us back to Jerusalem.  
Jeremiah is in prison  
And Babylon's has just about squeezed  
The life out of the city.

The situation is dire.

The time period is somewhere between 589 and 587 BCE

King Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against the city  
When Judah's King Zedekiah revolted.

The king installed by Nebuchadnezzar himself.

The siege lasted close to 2 years  
And produced horrific suffering.

**1**

**2 Kings 25:3 NRSV**

**<sup>3</sup>On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.**

**2**

**Lamentations 4:4 NRSV**

**<sup>4</sup>The tongue of the infant sticks  
to the roof of its mouth for thirst;  
the children beg for food,  
but no one gives them anything.**

### **3 Lamentations 4:10 NLT**

**<sup>10</sup> Tenderhearted women**

**have cooked their own children.**

**They have eaten them  
to survive the siege.**

I cannot imagine a more difficult situation.

During this unbearable situation  
God comes to Jeremiah.

God informs him, his cousin is coming,  
And wants Jeremiah to buy his farm.

And so, in the middle of all that suffering  
With Jeremiah in prison  
The city in siege by the Babylonian army

His cousin slips into the city  
And asks Jeremiah to buy his farm.

And Jeremiah buys it!

A bit weird, wouldn't you say  
Buying land in the middle of a siege?

Real estate values have plummeted  
There is no market for farms now.

You can buy a dozen farms for a song and a dance.

Besides that, what good would buying a farm do  
They're all going to die!

But God's message to was this.

4

**Jeremiah 32:15 CEV**

**15 I am the Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, and I promise you that people will once again buy and sell houses, farms, and vineyards in this country.**

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There's more to Jeremiah's purchase  
Than getting Jeremiah's cousin out of a bind.

And Jeremiah knows it.

And rather than doing the transaction  
In secret so he wouldn't look foolish.

He brings in witnesses  
Makes a big deal weighing out the money  
Has Baruch make copies of the deed

And in the presence of all those suffering Judeans  
Who were standing around with nothing to do  
But slowly starve to death

Jeremiah orders the deeds  
To be placed in a safe earthenware jar  
For preservation.

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Just as he did at the potter's house  
And the potter molding his clay.

And just as he did buying the expensive earthen jar  
And smashing it to the ground

Jeremiah gets theatrical and over the top dramatic!

But whereas before the symbolism prophesied  
God's disappointment and punishment

This clay pot symbolizes something else.

For in it is stored the future of Israel.

It symbolizes a coming time  
When Israel will return to their homes  
Farm the land their ancestors farmed

And raise families as they had done so for generations.

To those witnessing Jeremiah actions  
The deeds stored in an earthen jar  
Becomes a purchase of hope.

The hope that the current situation will not last forever.

That God indeed has plans for the people  
Plans for their welfare and not for their harm  
To give them a future with hope.

With his seventeen shekels  
Jeremiah purchases something more  
Than just his cousin's land.  
He purchases hope for the people of Israel.

If Jeremiah, the prophet, the voice of God  
Has hope enough to buy the farm  
In the middle of a war.

Then, by golly,

There just might be hope enough for the rest of them.

God offers everlasting hope to sustain them.

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According to Psychology Today

5

*Hope structures your life in anticipation of the future and influences how you feel in the present.*

6

*Hope creates a positive mood about an expectation, a goal, or a future situation. Such mental time travel influences your state of mind and alters your behavior in the present.*

7

*The positive feelings you experience as you look ahead, imagining hopefully what might happen, what you will attain, or who you are going to be, can alter how you currently view yourself.*

~~

Hope changes things.

Hope may not change your external circumstances

But it certainly changes how you view them.

In perhaps the darkest period of time

Ever to have befallen Jerusalem and Judah

God tells Jeremiah to go and buy some real estate!

And Jeremiah does so in as conspicuous a way as possible.

At the time, it must have looked ridiculous.

But it was a tangible expression life continues

The oppression they were facing  
    Though it would last 70 years  
        Would eventually be over

And they would be set free  
    To return to their homeland.

Jeremiah had given them hope  
    That their present suffering will not last  
        That the future held something better.

We hope it was enough for them to hold onto.

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Last week, the Brethren ended Annual Conference.

It was done virtually.

Other than agency reports and elections  
    The only business that was conducted  
        Was to approve the adoption  
            Of the church's Compelling Vision.

For those of you who don't know it, here it is.

8

*Together, as the Church of the Brethren,  
we will passionately live and share the radical transformation  
and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based  
neighborhood engagement. To move us forward, we will  
develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples who are  
innovative, adaptable, and fearless.*

It was voted on and approved.

In some way, as I see it  
The Compelling Vision is also a gesture of hope

It is similar to Jeremiah's purchase  
In its attempt to bring people hope  
During a difficult period in Brethren life.

I believe it is meant to unify and bring courage  
To a much divided and despairing denomination.

The membership decline has been exponential here of late

However, I admit, I look at any vision statements  
With a bit of skepticism.

I wish I didn't . . . but I do.

I have seen a lot of hard work go into them  
Without having any lasting impact.

But I too, need hope for the future of our denomination.

I was born a cradle Brethren  
And I have chosen to be a Brethren minister  
Because I believe in who we are.

I believe the Brethren have something to offer the world  
That is unique and needed

In essence, I see the Church of the Brethren  
Exhibiting characteristics Jesus would want in a church.

And so, I, for one, will jump into this new vision  
With both feet and with all my energy.

To do everything I can to support  
This congregation, the district, and the greater brotherhood.

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Beginning the second week in September  
We will begin a Bible Study series  
On the Compelling Vision

It will be in person at church  
On Sundays at 9:30 in the Gathering Room.

It is my hope we work together  
At understanding and then living out its commission.

With the hope of unifying and strengthening us  
To be the church God wants us to be. Amen?

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And so, Judith, we will build that house in Irigweland  
Trusting God that God has a plan for us  
To build up and not to tear down

And too, church, let's recommit ourselves to the Gospel  
Knowing God has plans for our welfare  
And plans to give us hope for our future.