

## WELCOME 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 – 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost '24 B

Jeremiah 32:6-27 & 36-41

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs/GPs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & farther out into his world to you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

**As we move into this week...** Under Siege... **not** the Steven Seagal action thriller... but the real life of so many...escalating prices, rising debt, political systems & policies that hurt more than help, failing health & capacity, family spiralling out of balance...Jerusalem is surrounded by an army & maybe you feel that way too.

In those situations, the last thing you think about is doing something everyone around you says is risky, absurd, ridiculous...**foolish!**

But that is exactly the kind of obedience God asks of Jeremiah. That's the type of faith God desires of his people. That's the hope that trusts the wisdom of God more than the opinion of the masses. And **THAT'S** what it means to be fully engaged in God's legacy. It may appear risky, absurd, ridiculous...**foolish!**

But God calls us to fully release ourselves into his hands knowing...

God's plan will continue on God's schedule according to the destiny God desires for each of his children.

**"I** will give them one heart and one purpose: to worship me forever, for their own good and for the good of all their descendants."

We'll experience & share that today...Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Lord God, each of us longs to know that the life we live here on earth will mean something, that it will make a difference or a lasting impact to someone or something that outlives us. Teach us by your word & the promises you have fulfilled in Christ to live only for the eternity of your love for us & to entrust that promise of eternal love to everyone we know...in Jesus' name, Amen.*

*Let's sing again & then hear God's Word*

## FAITH CHAT:

1. What's something positive you learned from your father that you still rely on now?  
*If you can't think of anything...What is one piece of advice you wish you could tell your younger self or pass on to the next generation?*
2. How do you share your experience of God as Father into the next generation(s)?

## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON:

Father we only get one shot at this life you've given us...lead us in trust toward full obedience & complete submission to you and into perfect likeness to Jesus your Son our Saviour & Lord. By your Spirit guide our hearts to release all we are into your legacy of faith & faithfulness. Bind every fear, doubt, or worry until we surrender in joy & delight to your plan & purpose for us. We turn now in humble abandon...through Jesus Christ...Amen

## 15 Pentecost '24 B – FULLY ENGAGED: WITH GOD'S LEGACY

When I put these letters up our Ladies Fellowship will (*should*) know what they mean:

**S** – W – A. I've put them on the spot they've all got amnesia. See – Wonder - Apply. It's the way I read the Bible & tell others to try. There are 100s of little insights like this for digging into a text & beginning to discern what God might be trying to teach you there. As you read a text...What do you SEE? What strikes you as interesting, odd, didn't know? What do you WONDER about that? Why is it there? What would it have meant to the people who were there? History behind...? Narrative context...? How do I APPLY this in my life? God gave me this in his word; what am I to do now? How does this fit w/ what I already know/believe/do? What do I need to **DO** differently? If this is true...what's MY responsibility know that I know? (*Jas 1:22 – TAKE IT HOME*)

As I've been reading & re-reading today's text from Jer 32...what struck me, what I SAW seemed goofy at first...It was a number...vs 9...**"So** I bought the field at Anathoth, paying Hanamel 17 pieces of silver for it." Now I don't know anything about ancient Israelite real estate prices...but **17**? What a strange #...It's an odd number & it's not a round #. Not 15. Not 20. It's not one of those Biblical #s...7, 12, 40. **17**? And I do know something about ancient bargaining practices...there's usually a fair amount of haggling...negotiating. None of that here, or at least none that we see in the text. So...I WONDER what's going on here?

Well...Jer 32:2 gives us part of **the** picture: *Jerusalem was then under siege from the Babylonian army, & Jeremiah was imprisoned in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace.* This siege would last ≈ 2 years then Jerusalem fell. While Jeremiah's locked up, God tells him to expect Hanamel to offer him right of 1<sup>st</sup> refusal on a piece of family land, & he's to buy it. **Then,** just as the Lord had said he would, my cousin Hanamel came & visited me in the prison. He said, "Please buy my field at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. By law you have the right to buy it before it is offered to anyone else, so buy it for yourself." What's going on? I reckon Hanamel's hunting "bug out" \$\$\$ He's probably got a plan to try & slip through the siege lines & escape the coming destruction & bribe his way to freedom if he gets caught. If he manages to **not** get caught, he'll have a small stake to get started somewhere else...Egypt? "Bug out" money.

The way those sorts of "deals" would be struck Hanamel would say his piece & add something like...*And look since we're family, I won't even mention it's worth 65 shekels or pieces of silver.* Then Jeremiah would make a counter offer & after some back & forth, they'd settle on an agreeable price. But **NB**...siege has lasted 2 years. Nobody has any money & no one's buying real estate especially at "mkt value."

**"Then** I knew that the message I had heard was from the Lord. So I bought the field at Anathoth, paying Hanamel 17 pieces of silver for it." God had forewarned Jeremiah of the events to come. They came to pass. Jeremiah knows this seems like a fool's bargain. He's broke. He's in jail. The Babylonians are starving the city to death & **WILL** rip down the walls, the Temple, & everything standing upright. 1000s will die. 1000s more will be dragged off as slaves for 70 yrs...**BUT**...God said, "Buy the field." So he did. Why? Because God has promised the exile would last only 70 yrs then there would be a return...Jer 25-26-27 (30-33) we see this beginning to unfold so now Jeremiah buys the farm as a sign that God's future is to be embraced wholeheartedly. Jeremiah lays his future fully into the design of God's future.

See those 17 shekels are most likely it for Jeremiah...all he has. He probably hands his money pouch to his cousin & says, "That's all there is there ain't no more. Take it. I'll sign the deed of transfer." And the deal is finalized & to every observer/witness to the transaction, it's absurd, ridiculous, foolish! Under siege, when there's no real hope of escape or relief...to go "all in" on some deal no one will be able to enforce...you just don't do that. **Except**...when you are fully engaged w/ God's legacy... w/ the destiny God says is coming... w/ the destiny God says he desires you **to** enjoy. Jeremiah lays his future fully into the design of God's future. Which of course points the finger at me & **asks**, "Where are your last 17 shekels invested?" Has God's promise fully taken control of your hopes, dreams, desires, aspirations, or have you kept the last 17 shekels to safeguard yourself? **Where** have you bet your future? This isn't just a **\$\$ & ¢¢** question...**Does** my life reflect my desires or God's desires? Does my life... my marriage, my work, my parenting, my engagement in my neighbourhood or on the College School Board, my serving the wider community, the way I interact w/ other churches/pastors...the way I build relationships in the places I go in this city give evidence that I live toward a legacy I do not have to safeguard defend or accomplish...but rather is mine because God promised it...& in Christ assures it? See – Wonder – Apply Where are your last 17 shekels invested? *If you're not dead you're not done.*

Years ago...I was in our 1<sup>st</sup> call in Sth Tx...maybe 6 mos...& the Sr Pr stuck his head in my office & said, "John we have a last minute meeting in my office. I think you'll enjoy it." So I grabbed a coffee & walked across to his office & sat down & in a few minutes a delightful smiling Sr Saint came in aided by her granddaughter. Her age & infirmities kept her from getting to worship on a Sunday but our visitation Pr was at her house every month & some of our women stopped by to chat & pray. She had a fabulous vibrant faith in Jesus but because Stan & I were relatively new to the congregation she had not met either of us & wanted to get to know the "pastors who would be burying her." After a bit I did what I do & asked if this funeral was 10 yrs

away what did she hope would happen in the meantime...I didn't know it then but it was the 17 shekels question. She looked at her granddaughter & then at me & said, "I'll pray every day she & her kids get to know Jesus' love & care like her grandfather & I have." Her last 17 shekels were going to be invested in a legacy of faith she hoped would be embraced & lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> generation. A public witness in the hope that "making disciples of all nations" included the nation of her family. Where are your last 17 shekels invested? Where have you bet your future? God's desires or yours?

But you gotta know, that puts Jeremiah on edge...He's spent 40+ yrs prophesying destruction if there's no repentance...& there's been no repentance. Now the Babylonians are there. He assured the nation God would restore what their punishment for their rebellion had wrought...70 yrs would see restoration. Now he's bet his future on God's future...I imagine the doubts, fears & apprehension explode in his heart...of course they do. How do I know: **Then** after I had given the papers to Baruch, I prayed to the Lord...His prayer retells God's history of faithfulness w/ his people. You made the heavens & earth by your strong hand & powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!...You performed miraculous signs & wonders in the land of Egypt—things still remembered to this day!...You brought Israel out of Egypt w/ mighty signs & wonders, w/ a strong hand & powerful arm, & w/ overwhelming terror. You gave the people of Israel this land that you had promised their ancestors long before—a land flowing w/ milk & honey... but they refused to obey you or follow your word. They have done nothing you commanded. That is why you have sent this terrible disaster upon them. See! The siege ramps are built against the city walls! This city will be handed over to the Babylonians, who will conquer it. Everything has happened just as you said. And yet, O Sovereign Lord, you have told me to buy the field—paying good \$\$\$ for it before these witnesses—even though the city will soon be handed over to the Babylonians. His inner trembling gives way to an outer expression of trust in the One who is trustworthy. **GP**...Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God...Jeremiah recounts WHAT he knows about WHOM he knows

When God calls you to act in foolish faith...risky obedience...absolute submission to his word & his **will**...Remember God's past faithfulness as a downpayment on God's future. Paul would remind the church in Corinth: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, & no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." — 1 Cor 2:9 Even Jeremiah didn't know the specifics of the next 70 yrs or how the restoration from exile would fully be accomplished...But he knew what God had done so far & what God had promised. Look...God's call will almost never take you someplace easily w/in your comfort zone. If it's too easy...it's probably not God calling. When God calls you to act in foolish faith...risky obedience...absolute submission to his word & his will... Remember God's past faithfulness as a downpayment in hopeful assurance of God's future. I. Am. Baptized. God you were right here when...Ps 136 (26vs)

I always have to remind myself...we often think of prophets as fortune tellers...that prophecy is about predicting the future...only among the pagans. Biblically, God's prophets spoke of how to live in accord w/ God's word toward God's future NOW. That "this" was what God has destined & "this" is how you live into what God intends to accomplish NOW. Or "this" is how you live to miss out. Jeremiah is told...

**Then** this message came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Now I want to say something more about this city. You have been saying, 'It will fall to the king of Babylon through war, famine, & disease.' **But this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says:** I will certainly bring my people back again from all the countries where I will scatter them in my fury. I will bring them back to this very city & let them live in peace & safety. They will be my people, & I will be their God. **I will give them one heart & one purpose: to worship me forever, for their own good & for the good of all their descendants.** I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good for them. I will put a desire in their hearts to worship me, & they will never leave me. I will find joy doing good for them & will faithfully & wholeheartedly replant them in this land. **BUT**...When God says, "But" you better take note. Rebellion, death, destruction, & exile are not God's final declaration. I will bring them back to this very city & let them live in peace & safety. Pain. Sorrow. Regret. Alienation. Those are not God's last words. Peace. Justice. Restoration. Righteousness. Hope. Joy. Love. All things made new...**We** have only a glimpse of God's future, but a life to live into it. Jerusalem is surrounded by an army & maybe you feel that way too. In those situations, the last thing you think about is doing something everyone around you says is risky, absurd, ridiculous...**foolish!** But that is exactly the kind of obedience God asks of Jeremiah/you. That's the type of faith God desires of his people. That's the hope that trusts the wisdom of God more than the opinion of the masses. And **THAT'S** what it means to be fully engaged in God's legacy. It may appear risky, absurd, ridiculous...**foolish!** But God calls us to fully release ourselves into his hands knowing...

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**TAKE IT HOME:** (take a bit & share with your neighbour)

- Where do you spend or invest your time and resources?
- What does that reveal about the legacy you are building?
- What are you going to do with your last "17 shekels?"

LET'S PRAY...