

BUY A FIELD**Jeremiah 32**

INTRO: Back in the '60s Carole King and Gerry Goffin wrote a song that might be familiar. It began with,
*Woke up this mornin' feelin' fine
 There's somethin' special on my mind
 Last night I met a new girl in the neighbourhood, whoa yeah
 Somethin' tells me I'm into something good.*

Yep, Herman's Hermits were the ones who made it a hit and it's an exuberant song about young love with all its potential, possibilities, and hope. I remember those days. I remember meeting Kathy for the first time and all the anticipation there was to see her again, day after day. I knew then I was into something good. And I was right. After just shy of 40 years of marriage, I did get someone good.

I know it's a stretch to make the analogy, but the people of Jerusalem, who were under siege, and whose situation was extremely grave, were into something good – and they didn't know it. Jeremiah was trying to encourage them and that is the subject of Jeremiah 32. What we have here is encouraging for us too. We're under siege as well. But, unlike the people of Judah who had the enemy at their gate, we have this prophesy to turn to in the Bible and almost 3000 years of Holy History to be our teacher and guide. We might be under siege from a virus and the often confusing leadership of those who seek to mitigate it by shooting blindly in the dark, but we have an all-knowing God who is already out on the other side of our siege inviting us to move forward in faith.

In Jeremiah's case, God's came clearly to him and told him to buy a field. Humanly speaking, it was crazy. God was telling his prophet to make a real-estate purchase in the worst market EVER! The forces of Babylon surrounded Jerusalem and it was only a matter of time before the city would fall. And when the capital of Judah fell, the country would fall, and when the country fell, all bets were off. Legal instruments such as deeds, contracts, and wills, would no longer be valid. To make a major land purchase right then was ludicrous – humanly speaking. But this was God speaking. And God is speaking to us too. And he is telling us to buy a field. Let me explain: We just sold a little sliver of land off the ABC property last year. That's not the kind of transaction I'm talking about. I'm talking about a transaction of faith. I'm talking about taking territory back that has been stolen by fear – it's another example of making an opportunity out of an obstacle.

Now, in case you're worried – I'm not going to read all of Jeremiah 32 which is really quite long. I'm going to talking about what it is to buy a field by looking at a few sections of this chapter.

First – let me continue in a similar vein to my intro . . .

In the midst of the siege it's good to know God's up to something

- Let me read the first 5 verses to you.

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. The army of the king of Babylon was then besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was confined in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace of Judah.

Now Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him there, saying, "Why do you prophesy as you do? You say, 'This is what the Lord says: I am about to give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will capture it. Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape the Babylonians but will certainly be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and will speak with him face to face and see him with his own eyes. He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, where he will remain until I deal with him, declares the Lord. If you fight against the Babylonians, you will not succeed.'" Jeremiah 32:1-5 (NIV)

- The chapter opens with Jeremiah locked up AGAIN! Actually, it's not the kind of confinement he's had at other times. At one time, he had actually be thrown into a cistern for punishment. Apparently this time is a bit more plus since he's in the royal palace. But he is confined because he insists on prophesying what the king does not want to hear. Specifically he is predicting the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the king. The king wants better news. But you can't will better news – especially when you refuse to do what is required for better news.
- Jeremiah's advice to the king is "God is up to something, and fight it all you may, but the outcome is the same. You will be captured and carried off toe Babylon. So don't fight it and watch God is going to do."
- That brings us to the next segment. Jeremiah is saying, in so many words. "I know . . .

It doesn't make earthly sense but God's on the other side of this

- Listen,
Jeremiah said, “The word of the Lord came to me: Hanamel son of Shallum your uncle is going to come to you and say, ‘Buy my field at Anathoth, because as nearest relative it is your right and duty to buy it.’ “Then, just as the Lord had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and said, ‘Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is your right to redeem it and possess it, buy it for yourself.’
“I knew that this was the word of the Lord; so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. I took the deed of purchase—the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, as well as the unsealed copy—and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard. Jeremiah 32:6-12
- In the middle of a siege, Jeremiah gets an offer to buy land and he buys it. A couple things here:
 - He is observing Jewish tradition. As the closest relative, Jeremiah gets first right of refusal on important family transactions. An example of this is the love story of Ruth and Boaz where Boaz is second in line to the person who has first right of refusal for Ruth’s hand in marriage. (Ruth 3:1-4:10). So, it’s not weird that Jeremiah gets this offer. What is weird is that he actually redeems it in a seemingly hopeless situation.
 - Jeremiah is prepared when his relative shows up and the transaction we have here in verses 9-12 is very detailed. Not only is it a picture into the business transactions of 600 BC which are amazingly similar to 2020 AD, but the step by step description shows how determined Jeremiah is to illustrate the kind of faith God requires of his people.
- So Jeremiah buys a field. During a siege. When property values have crashed. When, common sense would indicate the contract will be null and void as soon as the king capitulates. But here is the kicker: IT WAS TERRIBLE PROPERTY! It wasn’t even prime real-estate – jumping all the way to the end of the chapter, it was “*a desolate waste*” (verse 43). It made no earthly sense, but God was on the other side, saying “BUY A FIELD.” That is because . . .

Nothing is too difficult for God

- Now we all know this. Don’t we? I mean God is greater than any concern we have. Right? God is greater than all our needs. That’s why Jeremiah sang out in this prayer beginning at verse 17:
“Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the parents’ sins into the laps of their children after them. Great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to the ways of all mankind; you reward each person according to their conduct and as their deeds deserve. You performed signs and wonders in Egypt and have continued them to this day, in Israel and among all mankind, and have gained the renown that is still yours. Jeremiah 32:17-20.
- God is sovereign. That means he’s king of all. Everything! And that is because he made everything. EVERYTHING! He is Creator God. By the power of his outstretched arm he spoke the universe and everything in it, into being. Nothing is too difficult for him. He loves all and his justice is sure. His purposes and deeds are perfect and nothing escapes his oversight. This is the great God who is there when life is perfect and when life is besieged.
- So, when God says buy a field, you buy a field. Nothing is too difficult for him. In fact, his promise is this . . .

When all seems lost I am still God

- Skipping down in Jeremiah’s prayer, he describes what, in human terms, is a hopeless situation. Listen,
“See how the siege ramps are built up to take the city. Because of the sword, famine and plague, the city will be given into the hands of the Babylonians who are attacking it. What you said has happened, as you now see. And though the city will be given into the hands of the Babylonians, you, Sovereign Lord, say to me, ‘Buy the field with silver and have the transaction witnessed.’”

Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me? Therefore this is what the Lord says: I am about to give this city into the hands of the Babylonians and to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who will capture it. The Babylonians who are attacking this city will come in and set it on fire; they will burn it down, along with the houses where the people aroused my anger by burning incense on the roofs to Baal and by pouring out drink offerings to other gods. Jeremiah 32:24-29

- And Jeremiah has to swallow and take God at his word. "I just bought that worthless plot, and this is what you have planned? God's up to something and it's something good." And that's what we have to hang on to in the midst of our own COVID-19 siege. Here's the promise . . .

There is something for us on the other side of this

- It's at the end of chapter 32,
"This is what the Lord says: As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them. Once more fields will be bought in this land of which you say, 'It is a desolate waste, without people or animals, for it has been given into the hands of the Babylonians.' Fields will be bought for silver, and deeds will be signed, sealed and witnessed in the territory of Benjamin, in the villages around Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah and in the towns of the hill country, of the western foothills and of the Negev, because I will restore their fortunes, declares the Lord." Jeremiah 32:42-44
- I began by talking about how God's up to something good – and I end with it too. We're dealing with a lot of fear and frustration and we need to be reminded of God's goodness and his plans.
- Are you tired of this virus? I am too. Are you frustrated with the lists that show the rate of cases and fatalities creeping up rather than down? I am too. Do you feel like it will never end? I do too. Are you afraid? I hope not. God's got this. You have got to believe that if you are his child.
- Do you just want it to be normal again? I'm not sure normal is what we should be aiming for. I think we should be aiming for God's will to be done. And that might mean we might have to do something abnormal, he might even ask us to buy a field like he did Jeremiah.

Conclusion: Like Jeremiah we need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God has a future for us and we need faith in that future. The people of God, (that's us!) have a glorious future. That means we need to be maddeningly positive in a negative world. One commentator said of Jeremiah, *"In spite of the circling gloom the prophet maintained a steady and impressive optimism, not in the immediate deliverance of Jerusalem, but in the final purposes of God."* That's what it's all about Church!

We might be tired of this virus siege but let's not forget God's on the other side of this. Charles Jefferson wrote, *"It is dark today. It may be dark tomorrow. But there is always light ahead."* Just buy the field! Amen.