

GIVE THANKS FOR THE LORD IS GOOD!**Jeremiah 33:6-11**

INTRO: It's summer time and the livin' is easy! But the livin' hasn't necessarily easy. It hasn't been that terrible either. Several people posted this on Facebook over the past week. Arriving at May 31 has been hard fought even though we've been spared to a large extent what others have endured. And, as I've been pointing out over this month as we've looked at Jeremiah, and as Carolyn spoke about Stones of Remembrance as we return from Wilderness Wanderings, we've been in a bit of an exile the people of Israel.

Another thing about this day is that it is 50 days since we celebrated the Resurrection of Jesus. That is why Martha read that long passage from the Acts of the Apostles. We dare not forget to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit that occurred on that Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead and ten days after he returned to the Father. So, the livin' **IS** easy! For Christ Followers that is. He is the advocate, comforter, convicter, and helper. Without him life would be infinitely more difficult. Because he came we can indeed give thanks for the Lord is good!

My text for this talk by that same name is Jeremiah 33:6-11. Let me read it. (Read it)

It's interesting that Jeremiah brought these words of hope to the exiled people of God because they had just gone into exile. They had ignored God's law and Jeremiah's warnings and now they were a long way from home. It was like rubbing salt into a wound. But God disciplines us because he loves us. On the other side of this exile is a promised return. Jerusalem would be restored, and eventually it would be the place where the Holy Spirit arrived to finish out God's plan for humanity. It was another case of an opportunity from a perceived obstacle. Let's look at it.

Jeremiah is proclaiming . . .

God's plan for health and healing

- It is always God's plan for his Creation to be whole. It was his promise for Jerusalem and the people of Judah and Israel and it was his promise when Jesus went to the Cross to be the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. And it's his promise for creation in 2020. God wants healing. He promises healing. His promises are **Yes! And Amen!** (2 Corinthians 1:20)
- There will be peace and security. A couple weeks ago I watched a video on the world's most dangerous bridges and it was misnamed. With one exception, which afforded little margin for error of you go too close the edge, they were all strong and sturdy like the Royal Gorge Bridge in Colorado. They were considered dangerous simply because they were scary. But this is a scary bridge! It's flimsy and you want to make sure every step is well placed. The person crossing it does not feel secure until they have safely arrived on the other side on solid ground. The people of Israel and Judah had been in flimsy suspension for many years. They had no security because their faith was dilapidated. But God's restoration would put them on solid ground. There would be no more insecurity. The Babylonians would be a thing of the past. They would have peace.
- Verse 7 says they will be restored to what they were before. Before what? The exile? Nope! What they were before the exile is **WHY** they went into exile. God means they would be restored to the glory of Solomon's Jerusalem with the magnificent Temple to the glory of God.
- And they will be cleansed. They had soiled themselves by taking up with the disgusting pagan worship of Baal and Ashterah. But as they would learn and grow in exile, they will be cleansed and come home as new people.
- Because they would be forgiven. Forgiven. The penalty lifted. All things new. And so . . .

The city will be restored and it will be to God's glory

- John Newton wrote a hymn text based on Psalm 87 that extolled the glories of a restored Jerusalem and how it represents the restoration of God's people,

*Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God!
He, whose Word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for His own abode;
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?*

*With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.*

Sin doesn't stand a chance against God. What seemed to be defeat, is a stepping stone to God's glory.

- The world will see and see God for who he is: Righteous. Just. Merciful. Gracious. Does the world see that in you?
- Prosperity and peace, the way God wants it will be restored. The prosperity experienced prior to the exile came from ill-gotten gain. The rich clawed their way to wealth over the backs of the poor by using fraudulent weights and measures. The new prosperity would come from business practices infused with holiness and integrity.
- The world will see and tremble with awe as . . .

Sounds of joy and gladness will return

- in Jeremiah 7, his prophecy was *I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate.* Jeremiah 7:4, Jeremiah turns it around here with *Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom,* Jeremiah 33:10b-11a. God's got this, there IS a turnaround.
- The Psalmist reveled in the joy of the Lord in Psalm 30. In fact his language sounds a lot like Jeremiah's here, and he proclaims, *For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.* Psalm 30:5.
- The mourning of those suffering from the siege will be gone. The moans and homesick cries of the exiles will fade away. This was a desolate waste when Jeremiah bought his field in faith – now it will be a place of joy. What the land had come to because of sin would be restored because of God's mercy.
- In fact, a little over 500 years later in that same city there would be people hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ in their own languages as the Holy Spirit fell. Now that's happy noise!
- And it's our happy message too. A pandemic can't contain the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Give thanks for the Lord is good!

- God's love endures forever! It does. God is not fickle – he's holy. He's good. He must be consistent with himself – so what he says he will do. He must be consistent, because he's good! His salvation is for everyone who believes – but they need to believe. And then they must obey and then God will do as he promises He will restore his people.
- The fourth Thursday in November doesn't have a monopoly on Thanksgiving. God's people need to radiate thanks 24/7. Even in the midst of a pandemic we must be thankful. God's plans for us are perfect. We don't know what tomorrow will bring, but we know who is beyond tomorrow urging us forward.

Conclusion: The future is looking brighter. There is another side to this pandemic and we are seeing a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. We will be returning to our own restored Jerusalem. What are we going to do with that restoration?

The world still struggles. We are seeing tragic events in Minnesota. It shows, in many ways, humanity is no different and we haven't learned a thing. People still desperately need Jesus. We need to tell them. We need to live him. We need to be Jesus. Let's not be drawn into the fray of condemnation being tossed back and forth – let us be sound of joy and gladness. Let us be the voice of redemption and peace. Let us be a picture of thankfulness. The world needs it. Give thanks for the Lord is good! Amen.