

Two Visions of Uncertainty Jeremiah 1

Introduction

- As we start a new year, wouldn't it be great to know what to plan for?
- We try to do some of this
 - Resolutions- expectations for what we would like to accomplish in 2019
 - Budgets- what we expect to spend and save in 2019
 - New Calendars- what we expect to do in 2019
 - And yet, if we would do an inventory in June, how many of us would have to make adjustments to our expectations?
- There are some things we just can't plan for. There is an element of uncertainty in life, that all of us are familiar with.
- I've got the perfect verse to start your New Year out right.
 - **Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (ESV)**
 - Anyone ever heard that verse before?
 - If you are struggling to make New Year's resolutions, this verse should offer you some comfort.
 - God already has the plan.
 - It's a good plan
 - There's something to look forward to in 2019.
- Today, we are going to start a new sermon series entitled: *Persevering in Times of Uncertainty*
 - This sermon series will follow the life of the Prophet Jeremiah.
 - As I was preparing for this sermon series, I quickly realized that there were only a couple of verses that I was familiar with from the Book of Jeremiah
 - **Jeremiah 29:11**
 - The New Covenant **Jeremiah 31:31-34**
 - Just like there will be more to your year than Jeremiah 29:11, there's also more to the story of Jeremiah than just these few verses.
 - Jeremiah is often referred to as a weeping prophet, but it is his perseverance through uncertainty that really tells the story.
 - As Jeremiah persevered, God shaped his life.
- Let me encourage you with one Resolution to put on your list this year: Persevere
 - Opportunities with this sermon series
 - Sermons
 - Online resources
 - Reading Plan
 - *Run with the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best*
- Jeremiah's story begins with two visions
 - "I'm going to give you something important to say to the people, and I'm going to see that this word is fulfilled."

- “The people that I’m sending you to are not going to listen to what you have to say”
- The first vision is inspiring; the second vision leaves us asking, “So, what’s the point?”
- Jeremiah faces a similar dilemma that we all face in life
 - We make resolutions. We have expectations, but what happens when those expectations are not fulfilled?
 - What happens from Jeremiah 1 where Jeremiah receives two visions that leave him uncertain, to Jeremiah 29 where Jeremiah boldly proclaims that God has a glorious plan for the future?
 - I don’t know about you, but whatever Jeremiah figured out, I want to figure it out for my life.

Uncertainty Is No Match for God’s Sovereignty

- Every good story begins with a good plot.
- Difference between a Hallmark Movie and an Action Thriller
 - If you want to feel warm and fuzzy watch a Hallmark Movie. They are predictable. Guy A is in love with the girl. However the girl is in love with Guy B. The whole movie will revolve around Guy A trying to get the girl. By the end of the movie Guy B is a really just a nice guy, but the girl realizes that she is really in love with Guy A! The girl breaks the news to Guy B, “It’s not you, it’s me.” Guy A and the girl kiss at the end of the movie and then the next movie comes on with the same plot just a different title!
 - An action thriller follows a less predictable plot. Even if we know how the story will end, it’s the twists and turns that grab our attention.
 - There’s a difference between how we would like the story of our lives to play out (predictable) vs the stories we really enjoy (unpredictable).
 - The truth is; our lives are less predictable than what we would like for them to be.
- The Plot of Jeremiah’s Story
 - A Priest
 - Son of Hilkiah; lineage of Abiathar who was demoted by King Solomon (1 Kings 2:26-27)
 - Due to Jeremiah’s lineage he would have had little influence or authority
 - Josiah’s Reforms. (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35)
 - Temple Restored
 - Book of Law Found
 - Passover Reinstated for the first time since the the Prophet Samuel
 - “The initial year was a significant one in that it was just one year after the beginning of Josiah’s reform activity and one year before Babylon’s

Declaration of Independence from Assyria. Both the political world and the religious world were about to see dramatic changes.”¹

- After Josiah (2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36)
 - Sons (Jehoakim and Zedekiah) became king and did what was evil in the sight of God
 - Exile for 70 years
 - Cyrus, King of Persia fulfilled Jeremiah’s prophecy by rebuilding the temple
- 40 plus years of ministry, however did not live to see the Jews freed from Exile, the true fulfillment of his prophecy; Jeremiah died while in Exile
 - The Book of Jeremiah ends with the Jerusalem being taken by captives and the Temple of God being burned
 - It’s not a happy ending for Jeremiah
 - Where is the hope, the promise of God, the future that Jeremiah spoke about?
 - It doesn’t come for another 70 years, long after Jeremiah is dead.
- “To whom the word of the Lord came” (vs. 2)
 - From a historical perspective, Jeremiah’s life looks like a waste
 - But the key to Jeremiah’s life is not how the world judges people, but what role we play in what God is doing
 - The fact that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, tells us that God was moving in the midst of what was going on. The truth is that God is always up to something!
- Uncertainty is no match for God’s Sovereignty
 - The Book of Jeremiah will describe some difficult times, but through it all, we will see God moving
 - God never forgets about Jeremiah
 - This doesn’t mean that Jeremiah lives a risk free life
 - Jeremiah experiences doubt, frustration, Jeremiah even questions God
 - But the challenges that Jeremiah faces, are no match for God’s Sovereignty.
- It is necessary for us to make resolutions, budgets, and plans. All those things help us to be prepared and stay organized, but at some point we are going to have to trust the Sovereignty of God.
 - Very few people live a Hallmark Movie life
 - Even those who appear to have such a life, more than likely if you dig just below the surface, you will discover that the story is not as neat and predictable as you might think.
 - Uncertainty is no match for God’s Sovereignty

God’s Plan Defines Everything

¹ Walton, John H., Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000. Pg. 642.

- How many of you remember the day you were born?
 - You were there, right?
 - It was a pretty dramatic day
 - One of the most important days of your life, and you can't remember it!
 - That doesn't make it any less significant
 - Family helps to recreate the scene for us through stories and pictures
 - My grandfather always liked to tell the story of the day I was born
 - He was working out in the yard. It was a hot August day.
 - My grandmother came running out of the house announcing, "Seth is here! Seth is here! Seth is here!"
 - My grandfather responded, "Who is Seth?"
 - Whether you remember it or not, without that day, you wouldn't exist today.
- Ordination of Jeremiah (4-5)
 - Before he was born
 - A prophet to the nations o Resembles Psalm 139
 - "My identity does not begin when I begin to understand myself. There is something previous to what I think about myself, and it is what God thinks of me. That means that everything I think and feel is by nature a response, and the one to whom I respond is God. I never speak the first word. I never make the first move."²
- Jeremiah Challenged God's Call (6-8)
 - Much like Moses (Exodus 4:10) and Isaiah (Isiah 6), Jeremiah claims inadequacy to speak
 - Jeremiah also appeals to his youth
 - Although Jeremiah doesn't insist on it, his lineage and hometown could also have been other excuses. Certainly others like Gideon used this excuse.
 - In many ways Jeremiah's calling is not unique. God has consistently picked the most unlikely characters to lead. However, Jeremiah's calling is unique to Jeremiah. It is tailored to who Jeremiah is, and the context in which he lives. We have to consider our calling from a similar perspective.
 - Jeremiah has at least three choices
 - Accept God's Calling
 - Run away from God's Call, like Jonah
 - Become a false prophet whose message is not aligned with God's will and is self-serving
- God's Response to Jeremiah (9-10)
 - God touched Jeremiah's mouth, much like God did with Isaiah (Isaiah 6)
 - Put God's Word into Jeremiah's mouth
 - The phrase "The Word of the Lord came to" is mentioned four times in this chapter (2, 4, 11, 13)

² Peterson, Eugene. H. *Run With the Horses: The Quest For Life At Its Best*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009. Pg. 39.

- In the vision that God gives Jeremiah (12), God is watching over the divine word to perform it.
- “What will count isn’t whether Jeremiah has had time to develop wisdom, but whether God gives him things to say.”³
- God’s Plan Defines Everything
 - It doesn’t matter what the obstacles are
 - It doesn’t matter what the inadequacies are
 - It doesn’t matter how uncertain the circumstances may be
 - The only thing that matters is whether we respond to God’s call
- Jeremiah’s Purpose⁴
 - Pluck up and Break down- preaching against sin
 - Destroy and Overthrow- Message of Judgement
 - Build and Plant- Preach about hope and renewal
 - Despite the fact that the people will reject Jeremiah’s message, God will see his plan through!

Dress Yourself for Work

- Going to the gym, but not recognizing people because they are out of place, or not dressed like I remember them
- Jeremiah feels out of place
- **Jeremiah 1:17-19**
- The “BUT YOU” is significant in defining Jeremiah’s calling. It separates Jeremiah from the people. The calling is not dependent on the response of the people, but on the faithfulness of God.
 - Say to them what I have commanded you
 - They will fight against you, but they will not prevail against you, for I am with you. I will deliver you.
 - “God’s presence makes him like a fortified city, able to endure what will follow, and the calling, word, and presence of God will keep him save.” “He is invincible as long as he does God’s work. God’s sovereignty is his comfort.”⁵
- **Ephesians 6:10-13**
- Just because the future seems uncertain doesn’t mean that you are supposed to wait around.
 - Jeremiah knew what he needed to do in the moment that would eventually lead to the destination of God’s plan
 - Get dressed for work!
 - Trust the sovereignty of God over the uncertainty of our lives
 - Allow God’s plan to define our lives

Conclusion

³ Goldingay, John. *Jeremiah For Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2015. Pg. 9.

⁴ *The ESV Study Bible*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. Kindle Location, 196948.

⁵ *Ibid*. Kindle Location, 196986.

- Two Vision of Uncertainty
 - Do you believe that uncertainty is no match for God's sovereignty?
 - Are you following God's plan?
 - Are you dressed for work?
- Despite our best laid plans, I can guarantee one thing in all of our lives this year; there will be uncertainties.
 - Things we don't plan for will take place.
 - **Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (ESV)**
 - Uncertainty is no match for God's Sovereignty