

Living in the Present Jeremiah 29 & 31

Introduction

- Mom Traveling to Florida
 - Warm, Beach, Sunshine
 - I picked her up from the Columbus airport
 - 2 hour flight from Fort Lauderdale to Columbus
 - Call me when you board the plane
 - “Wait a minute. It’s going to take her 2 hours to fly from Florida to Ohio, and it’s going to take me 2 hours to drive just from Belpre to Columbus. Something is wrong with this picture!”
- Perseverance in Times of Uncertainty
 - Jeremiah the Prophet
 - Up to this point, Jeremiah has been preaching about judgement, and the people have refused to listen
 - Time for Exile-the moment that the Jews said would never come!
 - The trip from Jerusalem to Babylon was as quick as the flight from Columbus to Florida, however the destination was not the warm, sunny beach.
 - The trip back to Jerusalem would feel like the drive from Columbus to Belpre; a long trip that feels like you haven’t gone anywhere.
- Theologian John Goldingay writes about this particular passage of scripture, “Depression comes from living too much in the past and anxiety comes from living too much in the future. Only living in the present moment with God will relieve both.”¹
 - We are always moving toward something
 - Time never stops
 - Choices have to be made
 - We have to continue to live
 - Present journey
 - A quick flight to warm, sunny beach
 - OR, a long drive that leaves you feeling stuck in the same place
 - No matter what our present looks like, we need to live in the moment with God to experience our true destination.

Don’t stop living in the present

- **Jeremiah 29:4-7**
 - Babylon was not a welcomed destination
 - Sin/Judgement
 - Isolation
 - Blessing of God removed
 - God’s message to the exiles seems unusual

¹ Goldingay, John. *Jeremiah For Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2015. Pg.149.

- The command is not to live in isolation, and just grit it out
 - The command is to embrace the reality of what is!
 - Establish yourself
 - Reproduce
 - Contribute to Babylonian society
 - Deliverance is not the focus!
 - Why
 - **Jeremiah 29:10**
 - 70 years of Exile, the return trip to Jerusalem is going to take awhile
 - Accept the reality of the present
 - But in doing so, thrive where you are at!
- Theologian John Goldingay writes about this particular passage of scripture, “Depression comes from living too much in the past and anxiety comes from living too much in the future. Only living in the present moment with God will relieve both.”²
 - The Jews are stuck between the decisions from their past, and a future hope that is 70 years away!
 - Seasonal Depression
 - Therapy Session
 - When winter comes, I have to say goodbye to what I love to do. I know that Spring will come again, but it’s not for 3 months, which feels like an eternity.
 - I personally can relate to depression and anxiety—its not fun!
 - Living in the present is a difficult task for me no matter what season it is.
 - Recognize this about myself
 - Run
 - Winter-join a gym to stay in shape
 - Spring-don’t spend time getting back into shape, but ready to go
 - If I stop running, no matter what season it is, a part of me stops living.
- God’s message in exile: “Don’t stop living in the present”
 - This really goes for any present circumstance whether you find yourself at the beach, or stuck in a storm!
 - We have to make the most of where we are at presently in order to get to the destination we are intended for.
- How
 - Establish ourselves
 - Become a citizen of the present, with the understanding that we won’t remain forever
 - Pray-seek the Lord with all your heart
 - “I will visit you”
 - Implies that God’s presence is absent in exile.

² Ibid. 149.

- Certainly God’s protection was not the same
 - Consequence of sin, however God does not forget about us
 - There is a way out, but we have to embrace the present reality
- Pray for those in the present (7)
- Key to experiencing the future- **Jeremiah 29:11-13**
 - Call
 - Find the Lord when you seek him with all your heart
 - Psalm 139- intimidate prayer
 - Search me and know my heart
 - Point out my errors
 - Lead me in the way everlasting
 - **Daniel 9:3-6; 16-20**
 - Walter Brueggemann, “Yahweh wills a people utterly devoted. And when there is such an utterly devoted people, life is made newly possible.”³
- Don’t stop living in the present
 - Establish yourself
 - Become a citizen of the present
 - Seek the Lord with all your heart

Transform into the Future

- **Jeremiah 31:1**
 - Time element- 70 years in Babylon
 - Action- Call and Pray
 - Commitment- All of Heart
- Things to take with you on a journey
 - TSA and Weight requirements
 - Suitcase
 - Clothes
 - Toiletries
 - Books
- What God gives us during the journey from the present to the future
 - Grace in the wilderness (2)
 - Everlasting Love (3)
 - O virgin Israel (4)- restored relationship
 - Strength (11)
 - The journey is necessarily no matter how long it takes, because it is transformative. God’s grace and faithfulness is what we need to experience in the wilderness of our lives to be transformed.

³ Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998, Kindle Loc., loc. 3180

- Walter Brueggemann, “The love and faithfulness of God issue in the revitalization of every aspect of Israel’s daily and public life. The poem effectively holds together theological, socioeconomic, economic, and political dimensions of communal life; everything begins anew.”⁴
- Follow the Road Signs- **Jeremiah 31:21-22**
 - God’s Word, Jeremiah had been preaching it
 - Learn from the past
 - Respond to conviction
 - Walter Brueggemann, “The use of these images suggests that the poet wants to voice not just a changed venue for Israel, but also a genuine transformation that alters the very character of Israel and modes of relationships in the community.”⁵
 - Sitting in the corner as punishment
 - “How long?”
 - “I’m bored!”
 - Exactly! How much fun are you having?
 - Concern for a new location
 - I’m concerned in a different behavior
 - Have to follow the rules
- A New Relationship- **Jeremiah 31:31-34**
 - Implies that the Old Covenant was inadequate- this can be seen by the adultery of Israel.
 - **Hebrews 8:6-7, 13 (ESV), “But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”**
 - Put the law within them, written on their hearts
 - A renewed heart
 - Refer back to living in the present
 - All will know me-least to the greatest
 - I will forget their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.
 - It shall not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever.
 - Walter Brueggemann, “Israel will practice obedience because it belongs to Israel's character to live in this way. All inclination to resist, refuse, or disobey will have evaporated, because the members of the new community of covenant are transformed people who have rightly inclined hearts. There will be easy and ready community between God and reconstituted Israel.”⁶
- Transform into the Future

⁴ Ibid. kindle location 3475

⁵ Ibid. Kindle loc. 3531

⁶ Ibid. Kindle Loc. 3589

- Recognize what God has provided for the journey
- Follow the Road signs
- Experience a New Relationship with God

Conclusion

- Where are you presently?
 - Sunning
 - Stormy
- Don't stop living in the present
 - Establish yourself
 - Become a citizen of the present
 - Seek the Lord with all your heart
- Transform into the Future
 - Recognize what God has provided for the journey
 - Follow the Road signs
 - Experience a New Relationship with God
- Romans 5:3-5 (ESV), "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."
- Perseverance requires that we live in the present moment with God
 - Learn from the past
 - Find hope in the future
 - But we Live in the present!