

A great act of faith and trust - Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

Jeremiah buys some land

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.

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.

“In their presence I gave Baruch these instructions: ‘This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Take these documents, both the sealed and unsealed copies of the deed of purchase, and put them in a clay jar so they will last a long time. For this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.’

This is the word of the Lord

I pull into West Wyalong to fuel up the Harley.

It is raining, I'm cold and wet.

NSW's is flooding, there's water as far as you can see – in many places you can only see the top of the fence posts.

I rang Yvonne just to see how things were going – all was good.

She asked, since I was on the phone, if I knew what I was preaching about this Sunday – these wonderful musicians needed a hint so they could choose the right songs for this special day.

Well I didn't have a clue what I was preaching on. All I knew it was Deanna's baptism.

I asked Yvonne what the texts were.

So in the middle of the Hay plains I'm listening to Yvonne read from Jeremiah – all those names you can't say – including King Nebuchadnezzar.

It was bizzar – the gist of it was that God was asking Jeremiah to buy a block of land.

I said perfect – that's the sermon – Jeremiah buys a block of land.

I'm not sure what Yvonne thought – I'm not sure if that helped the musicians.

But Jeremiah sure helped me.

You see God is asking Jeremiah to do the strangest thing in the most difficult of times.

First of all, Jeremiah put us right in the picture with one short sentence: "In the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar".

That's enough to tell us the about the background to God asking Jeremiah to buy some land.

One sentence tells us that this was the time of terror in Israel when all the Israelites were rounded up – many of them killed – killed inside the Temple of God – and the rest sent to Babylon.

This is when the Boney M psalm 137 was written -

*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down
Yeah, we wept, when we remembered Zion*

There the wicked

Carried us away in captivity

Required from us a song

Now how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

The "wicked" in that song was King Nebuchadnezzar

So in one short sentence I got the context – evil and fear reign over Israel.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace that was under King Nebuchadnezzar

King Nebuchadnezzar teased then saying: "what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

Honestly, the rape, the pillage, and slaughter of Israeli under his reign is too much to say here – (but it's all said in here [bible])

The context is horror and despair from that one sentence: "In the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar".

Just like in history one day we will say: "In the reign of Vladimir Putin"

The second thing in all this is that God asks Jeremiah to buy a block of land in the war zone. It's land that belongs to Jeremiah's family.

There are very detailed instructions about the title: *the God of Israel, says: Take the documents...the deed of purchase, and put them in a clay jar so they will last a long time.*

God has a long term plan for Jeremiah and this land in war torn Israel.

Then God announces the promises the people have been longing to hear.

First to Jeremiah: Buy this land because you will plant vineyards and build houses here again – a big hint God will rescue Israel from Babylon.

Then the Lord showed Jeremiah some figs – some very good figs and some rotten figs.

God told Jeremiah these good figs – my best figs - are like my people captured in Babylon.

My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know me as the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God...

God could have stopped Nebuchadnezzar and the slaughter of Israel. But it seems He allowed it to happen.

Let's remember the Israelites before the exile were just as bad if not worse than Nebuchadnezzar - They were totally unfaithful.

King Manasseh – the Jewish king actively promoted the worship of the Canaanite fertility gods –in God's temple.

He set up an Asherah pole in God's temple – use your imagination what kind of fertility object is an Asherah pole.

He sacrificed his own sons in God's temple.

He "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood" (2 Kings 21:1-8, 16; 2 Chron. 33:1-8).

God describes his relationship with Israel as a husband and wife.

Much like us Jesus is the groom and we, the church, are his bride.

Before the exile to Babylon God says to Israel his unfaithful wife:

Look across the land is there a single rock you have not had sex behind? Is there any tree you have not been ravished under?

He's lamenting their worship of the fertility gods – untamed sex in the Temple of God.

Israel was rotten before the exile – the exile was a wakeup call – the sole purpose of the exile was to get the people to sing

*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down
Yeah, we wept, when we remembered Zion*

In other words to repent – to want to return to God.

Jeremiah buy a bit of land – I have great hope for you!

The senses tells us we are an ungodly nation.

We are under constant threat – Crisis in the South China Sea – the Russians could get serious at any time – if Ukrainian wheat does not get out there will be starvation - The Queen is dead.

Trent, Emily, buy a block of land – build a house – plant a crop – have a family - I have great hope for you.

Jeremiah: Fields will be purchased with silver, and deeds will be signed, ...in the land ...surrounding Jerusalem, I will restore my people from captivity, declares the LORD.”...

God’s promise of land and restoration – for us is in Jesus – Just as Israel was restored – through battles with evil kings – we too are restored through Jesus – through his battle and victory over evil.

He invites us to be a part of his victory over evil and death in Baptism.

To every young Christian couple God says: buy a block of land – build a house – plant a crop – have a family - I have great hope for you – I will be your God and you will be my people.

We live and die by the promises of God – his promise is for us to have life abundantly.

Jeremiah bought that block – he put the title in a clay jar and kept it safe as God told him.

Many years later when the grapes were being picked he carefully held that title in his hand and remembered the promises of God in what seemed complete hopelessness.

BTW when Jeremiah went to buy the crop, in other words when he trusted God - what was the advice of his friends? – you “fool”!

Buy the block – build a house – plant a crop – have a family - I have great hope for you.

In other words trust God.

Perhaps for you more elderly who have already bought the block and built the house – Luther said, if he knew the world was to end tomorrow he would plant an apple tree today – that’s an act of trust.

Trent and Emily we thank you for your act of trust today – to place your future in God’s hands – to entrust your daughter Deanna – in fact all your daughters - to the Lord.

And now our job is to honour you and Renae, and Caitlin, and Deanna as we help your family get to know Jesus.

In November we look forward to thanking Nathan and Ellen and Austin for their act of trust – and we will honour them as well.

I guess to sum it up, as Yvonne was reading Jeremiah to me as I was standing in the rain, shivering at West Wyalong.

It came straight away as she was reading; Trust the promises of God – the more improbable the situation – trust him more - Jeremiah is just one of many who bought the block, built the house, planted the crop, and had a family.

The same promise to Jeremiah is to all of us today – He says. I will be your God and you will be my people – no matter what is going on around us.

It’s the old Dr Phil principal (which is not his at all – it’s God’s): “The best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour”.

God kept his promises of old – he will keep his promises of new.