

Once And For All

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 14-16

Sunday, September 26, 2010

Some people I know have a quality I admire very much. They are people who don't let life just happen to them. They meet every challenge as an opportunity, every setback as a lesson, every mistake as one less mistake to make next time. They don't blame others. They don't whine. They are never mere victims. They have a sense, like a cat, how to land on their feet.

Among such people is an even rarer breed: persons who see and declare the goodness underlying all life! These rare folk are not naïve. Quite the opposite! In the good times, they are skeptical of promises built on glitz of the world: money, power, adulation, allure. But it is in the tough times that they stand out. They have a conviction that all things work for good and that their own destiny is in some way deeply assured. They are peaceful. There is a rhythm to their lives: they know when to jump into the adventure before them, and when to stop and let it go. They may not be famous, but wherever they go they bear a message of hope for all!

I don't count myself among their number. Not yet! I'm working on it! I pray about it all the time! You see, it takes a *once and for all* commitment to trust the goodness underneath all life. It's more than seeing or wanting or knowing that goodness. It is saying to myself, *There is no turning back. I choose to live this goodness now.*

But sometimes I get afraid! Do you know the voice of fear? The voice sounds something like this: *I won't have enough. This is too hard. I can't do that! I'm not good enough.* I can go on! There is also a voice of fear that masquerades as common sense. Do you know that voice? It says, *Well, the numbers don't add up. Or, I have to do this first. Or, the price is too high to pay.* How about those voices! Do I need to go on? Just the voices of fear!

Every day we make a choice between fear and love. Yes, between, *I can't* and *I trust.* Fear says, *I am too small!* Love says, *I am – we all are – part of something bigger.*

I take heart from Jeremiah this morning. In the good times, Jeremiah has been sort of a pill. When the market is booming, Jeremiah has asked, *For whom?* When the rich oppress the poor, Jeremiah hasn't called it, *freedom.* When government uses the name of God to justify its actions, Jeremiah has said, *Baloney.* No surprise, then, as our text begins this morning, that we find Jeremiah is under house arrest in the courtyard of the king where the king can keep any eye on him and nobody can listen to him!

If only the king and his court would listen! You see, tough times have come. Circumstances have changed dramatically. The unimaginable has happened. The army of Babylon is besieging Jerusalem and the city is in a panic. In a time of terror, there is no stock market. No housing market. There is barely a food market! Fear has arrived!

And what does Jeremiah do? He has a word from the Lord saying that God has not forgotten the people of Jerusalem. They face terrible times! But their destiny

is cared for. There will, one day again, be markets and vineyards and the vitality and bustle of a humming economy. For now, the word is, *Don't be afraid!* Jeremiah brings the point home by purchasing a piece of property. For he has made a *once and for all commitment* to trust in the promises of God – today!

Let me translate a bit. Until you and I make a decision that the love and presence and power of God is real and is the sole source of our security (and happiness!), our lives will seem an endless loop of events and circumstances that make us afraid and grind us down. We will be certain we are victims and we will have no word of comfort or hope to share with anyone.

The text today offers a different choice. So, I wonder. Have you ever gotten to the point where you say to yourself, *You know, I'm so done with fear. I'm so tired of blame. I don't really believe I am a victim.*

Have you ever seen the bumper sticker that says, *Life happens?* Well, actually, I am substituting the word *life* for another word, but I think you get the point! Stuff happens! But I have also seen the statement put another way: *Life happens! But misery is optional.* That's right! Life happens! But misery is optional! You can choose to be miserable. Or you can choose, as life happens, to see a string of opportunities for courage, for peace, for mercy, for forgiveness, for joy!

Here's my question for you this morning. Are you prepared to be a Jeremiah? Or better yet, are you prepared to be David or Sue or Chris or Carol or Marco or Betty or Peter or Kevin? Are you done with fear? Are you finished "imprisoning"

yourself where no one can listen to you? In your heart, do you want to trust God as the sole source of your security and peace of mind? Are you ready now?

Then join me in making a *once and for all* commitment to putting all our outcomes in the hands of God! Join me in noticing that each day brings choices between love and fear. And join me in claiming the goodness of the choice – in the tough times and the good times! After all, what have we got to lose except fear itself!?

Amen