

“A Future Filled with Hope”
Psalm 37:1-9; Jeremiah 29:10-14
10.2.22
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
West End Presbyterian Church
Sermon #38

Psalm 37:1-9 (NRSV)

Of David.

1 Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers,

2 for they will soon fade like the grass
and wither like the green herb.

3 Trust in the Lord and do good;
live in the land and enjoy security.

4 Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

5 Commit your way to the Lord;

trust in him, and he will act.

6 He will make your vindication shine like the light

and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

7 Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him;

do not fret over those who prosper in their way,

over those who carry out evil devices.

8 Refrain from anger and forsake wrath.

Do not fret—it leads only to evil.

9 For the wicked shall be cut off,

but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

The Word of God for the People of God! **Thanks be to God!**

Jeremiah 29:10-14 (NRSV)

10 For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. **12** Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. **13** When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, **14** I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I

sent you into exile.

The Word of God for the People of God! **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

One of my favorite franchises is Star Wars. Since 2015, Star Wars has seen an explosion of large and small screen productions. Now with the advent of Disney+, I am able to enjoy more original programming of a beloved universe. One movie of note is *Star Wars: Rogue One*. If you are not familiar with it, allow me to give you a bit of background.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...there was unrest in the galaxy. The Galactic Republic was taken over bit by bit and shaped into the evil Galactic Empire. What was a beacon of democracy that stood for justice and truth was now ruled by greedy thugs and power-hungry despots. The military was the answer to everything. But, all of the thugs, despots, and strongmen paled in comparison to Emperor Palpatine, who was really an evil Sith Lord consumed by an insatiable thirst for power who, with the help of Darth Vader, was able to hunt down nearly all the Jedi who were the keepers of the

peace.

Despite the control the emperor thought he had, there were pockets of folks who fought back. Unfortunately, the pockets of resistance throughout the galaxy saw limited success. Until the movie *Rogue One*.

Enter Jyn Erso. She helps the rebels find the plans for the ultimate weapon in the galaxy: The Death Star. As big as a small moon, the Death Star has the power to destroy planets in the blink of an eye. Needless to say, the rebels are overwhelmed at what to do. They do not have the firepower to destroy the Death Star nor do they have consensus on what to do.

Jyn Erso makes a speech and it stirs the hearts of those in the Alliance. At the end of her speech she says “This is our chance to make a difference. We have hope. Rebellions are built on hope!” Shortly after the speech, Erso and a ragtag band of misfits manage to steal an imperial shuttlecraft, sneak into an imperial base, create havoc, and seize the plans of the Death Star which include its weakness.

All of the main characters die in this movie. They died fighting the imperial troops as they stole the plans to the Death Star. So, Jen Erso and the others do not see the fruit of their labor. But, that didn't make any difference to them when they fought to the bitter end. They knew what they had to do and they did it. Their sacrifices made it possible for the Rebel Alliance to obtain the plans

to the Death Star.

While Jen Erso's speech was stirring, it's at the very end of the movie where, after the plans are downloaded on a Rebel Alliance ship being chased after the Empire, one of the finest moments in Star Wars happens. A Rebel officer who has the plans brings them to Princess Leia and he asks what these plans are and she responds with one word: "Hope."

Hope. Hope is a noun and a verb. Hope is a feeling and an action. We yearn for something to happen. We have our plans in life. We have dreams. Hope is also when we expect, anticipate, and look toward something in the future. Hope is active and messy and the Prophet Jeremiah knew that.

Jeremiah's whole life had been one of proclaiming the message of

hope in the midst of despair. Now, he's speaking more words from God to the Israelites about a future filled with hope. Hope where, after the seventy years of exile, the LORD will visit the people again and bring them home. But, it doesn't end there, the LORD plans for the people to prosper. The LORD will hear the people when they call. The LORD will be found when they seek God. The Israelites' fortunes will be restored.

But, there is one thing that the people must do. They must seek the LORD with their whole hearts. God's chosen must actively seek the LORD with their whole hearts. That means following all the ground rules God set in place at the very beginning of this complicated relationship which began with Abraham and Sarah: Love God, love neighbor, and love yourself.

So, the people are not only waiting for the LORD, they are actively

seeking the LORD with their whole hearts. In hope, the people wait. In hope, the people actively seek out the Creator of Heaven and Earth who liberated the people from pharaoh, parted the rivers, gave them food and water, protected them from harm, and has many more wonderful surprises awaiting them. A future filled with hope.

West End, that's the God we serve. God's best work is not left to the past. God's best work is yet to come. Our rich heritage is one to celebrate. On the other hand, our hope-filled future will make the past look like an afterthought because God's always up to something, even if we feel as if we're in some sort of exile like our ancestors thousands of years ago.

We are stewards of what was put forward into motion even before

the foundations of the earth were laid by God Almighty. We are stewards of the lineage our spiritual ancestors brought here to this area that make up West End Presbyterian Church. And now as we move forward into stewardship season and the next step of the call process for WEPC's next minister, we go forward in a future filled with hope. And for this moment in time, as Jyn Erso told the band of resistance fighters, this is our chance to make a difference. We have hope. Hope that expects. Hope that seeks.

Siblings in Christ, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.