

“New Life!”
Psalm 91; Jeremiah 32:1-15
9.25.22
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
West End Presbyterian Church
Sermon #37

Psalm 91 (NRSV)

1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High,

who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,

2 will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress;

my God, in whom I trust.”

3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the hunter

and from the deadly pestilence;

4 he will cover you with his pinions,

and under his wings you will find refuge;

his faithfulness is a shield and defense.

5 You will not fear the terror of the night

or the arrow that flies by day

6 or the pestilence that stalks in darkness

or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side,

ten thousand at your right hand,

but it will not come near you.

8 You will only look with your eyes

and see the punishment of the wicked.

9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge,

the Most High your dwelling place,

10 no evil shall befall you,

no scourge come near your tent.

11 For he will command his angels concerning you

to guard you in all your ways.

12 On their hands they will bear you up,

so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

13 You will tread on the lion and the adder;

the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

14 Those who love me, I will deliver;

I will protect those who know my name.

15 When they call to me, I will answer them;

I will be with them in trouble;

I will rescue them and honor them.

16 With long life I will satisfy them

and show them my salvation.

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

Jeremiah 32:1-15 (NRSV)

32:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. 2 At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah, 3 where King Zedekiah of Judah had confined him. Zedekiah had said, “Why do you prophesy and say: Thus says the Lord: I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; 4 King Zedekiah of Judah shall not escape out of the hands of the Chaldeans but shall surely be given into the hands of the king of Babylon and shall speak with him face to face and see

him eye to eye, 5 and he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I attend to him, says the Lord; though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed?”

6 Jeremiah said, “The word of the Lord came to me: 7 Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.’ ” 8 Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the Lord, and said to me, “Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.” Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.

9 And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out the silver to him, seventeen shekels of silver. 10 I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the silver on scales. 11 Then I took the sealed deed of purchase containing the terms and conditions and the open copy, 12 and I gave the deed of

purchase to Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard. 13 In their presence I charged Baruch, saying, 14 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time. 15 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.”

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.

During the early days of World War II, the Nazis began their invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. These countries were the final barrier between Germany and France. In early May of 1940, the Germans began their offensive, known as the blitzkrieg, where they overwhelmed the unprepared Allied forces against the monstrosity of the Third Reich. Engagement after engagement, the Allies continued to surrender or fall back.

Ultimately, France was all that stood between the fascists and the British. The United States had yet to join the war and the prospects of protecting the world from Hitler seemed grim. Parts of France

fell to the Third Reich, communications and escape routes were being cut off, and the only route that was available for the Allies to safely retreat to and regroup in England was Dunkirk. While they were surrounded by all sides, their rear was the English Channel and, ultimately, the sole escape route. The Allies knew they had to leave mainland Europe in order to have a fighting chance to save the world.

The British began Operation Dynamo. As an aside, if you want to know more about Dunkirk, I highly recommend the 2017 movie of the same name. Every small civilian craft available was called to cross the English Channel and bring the troops to England. All of this had to be done before the Germans arrived and time was running short. Starting May 27, 1940 and for the next week or so, almost 400,000 Allied troops were evacuated. People whose homes now under the control of the Nazis were facing exile. While

Operation Dynamo was successful, it was still a costly defeat for the British and the free world. Most equipment was left behind in mainland Europe to make the escape possible.

I don't think most of us can imagine what it's like to abandon our homes. Of course, we hear about it through the numerous wars and violence that occur throughout our world on a daily basis.

Obviously, the war in Ukraine gives us a glimpse into the plight of what many in various continents have to face when trying to escape war or some other disaster. Sometimes, in order to live, one must retreat. It's not an easy choice and most of us cannot pretend to know that we have any earthly idea what it's like to do so.

Then perhaps we can think about the tough spot Jeremiah is in. He has been preaching repentance to stubborn people. Jeremiah

faithfully responded to the LORD's call on his life only to be put in confinement by King Zedekiah because he didn't like what the prophet had to say. Yet, Jeremiah continued to preach repentance anyway. Jeremiah spoke the LORD's Word to the people that they would be expelled from their land and God would use the Babylonians to make that happen. As we have read together in today's scripture, while the Babylonians have surrounded the city, King Zedekiah questions whether the LORD's Word that the Babylonians will win.

Prepare for exile.

The besieging of Jerusalem didn't happen overnight. The chaos in the land of Judah was not a one time thing. The eventual separation of the northern and southern kingdoms following King

Solomon's reign was years in the making. Our ancestors thousands of years ago were told even before they entered the Promised Land to worship *only* the LORD God Almighty, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. They were to take care of the widowed, orphaned, and the poor. The Israelites were commanded to love the immigrants among them because they were immigrants in Egypt. The Israelites were given every chance to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Instead, they chased after false gods over the years. Now, the Promised Land is about to vomit the people out because they defiled the land and the LORD's heritage.

Before the exile happens, before more destruction takes place, there is a beautiful moment in the midst of heartache. The Prophet Jeremiah puts his money where his mouth is and purchases some

land. “Houses, fields, and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.”

Again, I’m not sure how many of us can understand the heartache the people of Israel are about to face. I’m not even sure many of us can truly comprehend being in Jeremiah’s place. At a young age when the LORD spoke to Jeremiah in chapter one, the young boy was told that he would “build, plant, overthrow, and destroy” and he was appointed over nations and kingdoms. After years of his prophetic ministry to now being confined to the palace walls, Jeremiah hears another word from God. It’s a hard word, but it’s also a comforting word. After your exile, you will return. And you will live there to build and plant again.

I wonder what the soldiers thought over eighty years ago as they evacuated Dunkirk. Do you suppose any heard a word from the LORD that they would return? Do you suppose some junior officer on one of the small civilian-owned boats looked at mainland Europe and said that this was not the end? Who knows. But, some four years later, almost to the day, about a four hour drive for travelers today, the Allies would return and begin the process of liberation from the fascists.

Maybe Jeremiah, Baruch, cousin Hanamel, and the witnesses to the signing of the deed were the only ones who dared to believe the words uttered by God. How could new life begin again in the shadow of destruction? Well, God is always up to something. God is always doing a new thing. Even in the depths of despair when all seems hopeless, even when it seems our homes have been lost due to family dysfunction or disaster, even when we think God has

abandoned us, there is a prophet giving a word of comfort in the sadness. And that word is this: For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of West End Presbyterian Church: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.”

Siblings in Christ, trust this Good News!

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