

“I Am Creating All Things New”

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ...

If I were to ask everyone this morning, “What are you afraid of?” – I would imagine that some of you would say, “Spiders”, or “Snakes”... some would tell me they were afraid of heights, or being trapped in tight spaces... and still others might say that they’re ‘afraid of the dark’ or ‘afraid of being alone’... and the reason why you might say any one of those things is because they’re the most common fears that people have... they’re what we call ‘phobias’...

But there’s a fear that is as common – (that very few people even know they have – and some refuse to admit) – and that’s the ‘fear of the future’... the fear of tomorrow...

In fact, just the other day I was speaking to a woman who had recently gone through a divorce – she was behind in her bills – and she wasn’t very happy at her place of employment... and all I said to her was, “Where’s your hope?” - and she went on for about 10 minutes about how she had nothing happy to look forward to – how she was sick and tired of the Corona Virus and how she expected more of the same in 2021 – and how none of this surprised her and that this was supposed to be her ‘lot in life’...

And two things went through my mind as she spoke – the first being ‘sympathy’ (I mean, she did have a lot of hurts along the way – and to see her so pessimistic about her outlook on life – was actually sort of sad)...

But the second thing I started thinking about - was that when you start believing that tomorrow is going to be so awful – and that nothing good will ever come your way (yes, it usually becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy – in that, negativity attracts negativity) but (without meaning to sound judgmental) I also see it as stumbling block in our faith (in what God can do)... and if you allow it to take residence in your mind (and in your being) it can also cause you to become stuck in the past – rather than hopeful and excited – for tomorrow...

A good example is found in Charles Dickens’ ‘Great Expectations’... if you know the story - you might remember the character named Miss Havisham... she was the woman who experienced the trauma of being left, alone, waiting at the altar (on her wedding day)... and in the story we discover that she was so disappointed and so hurt by that experience – that she let all the clocks in her mansion stop – she

refused to throw out her wedding cake or take off her wedding dress – and the worst part of her story was that she could never look to the future with hope (ever again)... you might say that she allowed her past (to define her future)...

You know, I guess you could justify anything... and someone here today can mention that the reason why their outlook for the future is so dim is because of something that happened in childhood... or because they've been hurt so many times before... or because of this pandemic (that has affected all of us in some way)...

And listen – we do know that the Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 3 that “*there is a time for everything under the sun (a time for mourning and a time for joy – a time for war and a time for peace)*”... and if you're experiencing a fresh wound (the best thing you can do is give yourself some time to heal)... but what I'm trying to get you to see this morning is that if you're not careful - that same *season* can also become a *lifetime* of misery – of pessimism – of darkness and gloom - but most importantly – a lifetime of doubting what the Bible also says in Rev. 21:5 – where we learn again and again that God continues to always, “make all things new”... that God is a god of abundance and blessing and

Now I share these thoughts with you this morning after spending a few days thinking about and meditating on our passage this morning from Jeremiah 31...

Jeremiah, as you know, was a prophet... he was raised to be a priest and then God called him to be a prophet when he was about 20 years old... and did Jeremiah ever have his setbacks in life?... you better believe it!... the Bible tells us that he was arrested at times, spent time in hiding, was rejected, was beaten – all for doing good in the world (for doing God's work) - but the beauty of this man's life is that he never doubted the goodness of God to see him through...

And his mission in life was to speak to God's people at the worst point in their own history – when they had turned their backs on God and found themselves in exile (as slaves in chains)... it was a time when morale was low – optimism was rare – and even the Psalmist tells us that the people kept looking back (instead of looking to the future with hope)... in fact, in Psalm 137:1 we read, “*Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept as we thought of Jerusalem.*”

But even with all of this going on – with many of God's children losing faith and many becoming hesitant to believe that even God could bring back their joy – the prophet keeps encouraging them to turn back to Him (to hold onto their faith) and

to keep their eyes on the Lord at all times – because He was about to ‘make all things new’ once again...

And I love what the prophet Jeremiah foresees in their future... he says to us in Jeremiah 31:12, *“They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again.”*...

And did their deliverance come immediately?... No! – but the truth is that it did come... and our Bible records that not only did the Children of God return to the Land of Israel – and not only did they find prosperity and become a ‘Light Shining in the Darkness’ once again – but God also sent them our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (who spent his own life telling those who would listen (not to live their lives in hopelessness and despair) but believing that God had good things in store for those who believed...

And Friends, that message still holds true for us today – sure there are going to be ups and downs in life – but if all you’re doing is constantly looking back to the hurts, and the pains, and you keep holding onto every grudge you have against every person who has ever done you wrong – not only do I think that’s a very dangerous place to dwell – but it’s sort of like constantly picking at a scab (in that – unless you can also leave it alone for a while – you’re never going to find the healing you really need)...

And if you let the worries of this day steal your hope for the future (what you lose is your joy for today)... and no one should be allowed to steal away your joy (because you are a Child of God)...

But instead – as we all approach the days ahead (and we all approach a new day – one that the Lord has made) can I at least suggest that we put the same lens on that the Prophet Jeremiah looked through - as he pondered his own unknown future - in chapter 29 verse 11, *“For I know the plans I have for you,”* declares the LORD, *“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”*...

Let me close with an email that was sent to me a while back about two men who found themselves in a very uncomfortable place... it was during war time and both men had been sent to a hospital (that was always busy – yet not attentive to their needs)... to make matters worse, the food was horrible, the beds were uncomfortable, and the nurses were short staffed...

But a strange thing happened in that hospital room – strange in that the man who say closest to the window always had positive things to say (and to share) with the men who had an even more difficult time in the other bed...

And on one occasion the man closest to the window spoke about seeing parades – and children laughing and smiling – he mentioned how he saw beautiful blue skies and did his best to describe beautiful sunsets and singing birds...

This went on and on for days – until one day – the man closest to the window stopped breathing and died...

Well, the other man sort of missed hearing his daily message of positivity and happiness – and thought to himself, “Well, the only way I, too, can be positive is if I can get the bed near the window”... and so, immediately the man called for the nurses to move him to the other side of the room...

But if you know the story – a strange thing happened when the man was moved... he learned that not only was there nothing more than a view of a brick wall outside that window – but the man who had been giving all of these positive reports about sunshine and parades and birds singing (had also been blind)...

And the moral of that story (as I’ve understood it) is that peace – and joy – and the good things of God (don’t come from a room with a view) but they come from your heart...

And I would add that your own future will look beautiful and wonderful and hopeful (not when someone does that for you – or your life finally becomes ‘problem free’) but when you’re also willing to look at the world around you with the eyes of faith that God has already given you...

May our eyes be opened to see the goodness of God... may our hearts be receptive to the hope that we have in our Lord and Savior... and may we always be blessed to be called, ‘The Children of God’...

In Jesus’ name we pray!

Amen!