

SEASON OF CREATION WATER

Sunday September 25th 2016

INVESTING in HOPE

A Reflection by Peggy Jensen

Scripture : Jeremiah 32: 1-3a, 6-15

Houses, fields, and vineyards shall again be purchased.

1 Timothy 6:6-12, 17-19

Do good, be rich in good works, and be ready to share.

Prayer: Creator God, sometimes we feel overwhelmed by all the changes and we lose hope for the future. Open our hearts and minds to hear your message of hope through Jeremiah's story. As the rain refreshes the earth, may the words we share refresh our Spirits. Amen

We hear a lot about the housing crisis, the lack of affordable housing for students and young people with families, especially in the Vancouver area. We are blessed to be able to live in this part of the world, no wonder many others would like to live here too. How many of you bought land here on Gabriola thinking that this would be an investment for your family and your future generations? Some of you have inherited the land because your grandparents invested in the future for the family.

When we hear the story of Jeremiah purchasing the land in Anathoth, we can relate to a real estate transaction. The circumstances were a little different 587 years before Jesus Christ. This is a prophetic symbolic action. Jeremiah's field was located in the city of Jerusalem, and Jeremiah bought it while the Babylonian army was threatening the city of Jerusalem. It is only a matter of time before the city falls. Jeremiah predicted that the Babylonians would win, so the King imprisoned him for being a traitor.

Last week I spoke about the significance of the Holy Land for the Jewish people. Here we have a piece of land right in the hot-bed of land claims and conflict.

Why did Jeremiah get involved in this real estate transaction?

Jeremiah did not buy the land because it looked like a good investment for his pension plan. He did it because God told him, somehow, that a relative would offer him land. When that relative appeared, it confirmed for Jeremiah that God had spoken. In the most detailed business transaction recorded in the Bible, Jeremiah buys a piece of land and has the deed duly witnessed and filed for posterity. Jeremiah takes this action as publicly as possible from within his prison, affirming to all that the future still matters, despite the terrible threat facing the people. This action symbolizes in a very practical manner that God was with them.

The prophet knew that without hope, without a dream, without a vision, the people would perish. What was true in the days of Jeremiah is just as true today, here in our context. Where is our field of promise? What land is symbolic of hope for the future? What is your dream? What is your vision for this community of faith?

We have resources and opportunities to invest in a future together.

Faithfulness often calls us to do things that seem contrary to common sense. Not many of us will be imprisoned for our faith, or called to buy land with invaders at the door. Yet, even knowing that the future is in God's hands changes things. God's ways are trustworthy, even in times of despair, and hopelessness. These ways can be trusted even when it seems mysterious to us. Are you willing to trust in God's exciting plan? What are you willing to risk to make an investment in God's eternal ways?

Do you see our work together is this shared ministry as an investment in the future?
Are people involved in the church making a prophetic investment? An investment of time, talent and money?!!

As you look around, you'll think about people who are no longer here. Some have moved away, some have drifted away. Now look around and see who is here now. Some of these people have come in the last year, and we are happy to welcome them. From my perspective, you seem happy to worship together, the pews are at least half full and the singing is much stronger. You are a blessed community with potential for the future. Yes, the church has changed and will continue to change. Change is good and necessary. When you have a strong community who understands what God is directing them to be and do, people will be attracted to worship here. Our next step is to determine our purpose as a Christian community of faith.

Yesterday John Bell commented on folks who say :” We are an aging congregation.”! John Bell said the last time he checked we all age one day at a time, do some congregations have a magic aging process? Be careful about what rumours you are spreading. Does it mean only grey haired folk are expected? John Bell also stressed how valuable older people were for God's purposes. Like father Abraham and Sarah giving birth and Moses directing the Hebrews to the promised land. God trusts the wise elders to lead the people. We are mid-wives for a new way of being the church. Our grand-children may not be regular church attenders, but we can show them what difference it makes in our lives. We can share God's love with all those we care about. Often it is our actions more than our words.

The reading from Timothy reminds us of some practical actions for everyday living. As one commentator put it: “Maintaining the faith and living the faith require the energy of a good athlete. A life that enduringly pursues such qualities as righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness, is an athletic act of faith, a life of wholeness and total commitment to the ways of God.” Well, I am not any athlete but I am able to do these things to the best of my ability. This is not just physical athletic ability. It requires the fire of our spirit's will, the direction of our mind and the compass of the heart. To live into this faith full life we must be fully engaged- - - body, mind, spirit, and heart - - - to follow the ways of God. God richly provides us with the energy to do this and we can practice it every day. We can create a good foundation for the future by doing good, being generous, and sharing the blessings we have received.

You are invited to invest in hope by living and loving faithfully.