

Sermon
8 March 2015
West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Text: Jeremiah 29:10-14

Baptism (PH)

If there is one thing most of us are not very good at, it's waiting.

We live in a world where things happen fast. And where convenience is of the essence. 20 years ago, if you realised you needed something from the shops at 10pm on a Saturday evening, you would just have had to accept the fact that you wouldn't be able to get it before Monday.

But now, if you realise that you need something for the shops at 10pm on a Saturday evening, you go online straight away and order next day delivery. Or you jump in your car and go to one of the very many stores in our area that are open for 24 hours a day, and buy what you need, there and then.

We're living in the fast lane, getting things done... We don't like waiting.

And if we *do* have to wait, we're not always the nicest people to be around, because, be honest – who of you have not muttered under your breath when you made a phone call and a recorded voice said: "Your call is important to us. Please hold the line..." And then a very annoying

tune starts playing for a while, until the voice again says: “Your call is important to us. Please hold the line...” And then there’s that tune again (and as if that is not enough, long after you have spoken to whoever you were holding the line for, that tune still plays over and over in your head!!)

We want service, and we want it straight away! We don’t like waiting!

And this realisation brought me to the conclusion that because the time and the world we live in makes us impatient, that might be one of the reasons why our churches are not full any more.

Because people ask something from God, and if they don’t get an answer straight away, they just scrap God from their lives and move on. Without giving it a second thought.

But actually, if we were just a wee bit more patient, we would realise that God always answers our prayers.

Yes, you heard me right: God will *never* ignore us, He always *answers* our prayers! He just doesn’t always say “yes”...

That is because he sees the bigger picture; he knows what is best for us. So even if God’s answer doesn’t always *make sense* to us, that doesn’t mean that it is not the right thing for us.

If we ask something from God, he’ll answer us in 1 of 3 ways. He could say “yes”, or he could say “no”, or he could say “wait, not yet.”

If He says yes, we're usually very happy; if He says no, we're usually disappointed, but soon enough we realise that there's nothing we can do about it and then we move on; but it's with the 3rd one that I think we really struggle, namely when He says "wait, not yet". Because we are so very impatient.



Long long ago, in the time of Jeremiah, God's people asked him to set them free. They were taken into exile by the Babylonians, and they wanted to go home. But God said: "Wait. Not yet."

The passage we read this morning forms part of a letter the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon. In this letter Jeremiah is telling the people what God says about them being in captivity.

He tells them to settle down where they are, because he *will* bring them back home, but not just yet. In just about 70 years.

God heard them. God answered them. But his answer was "wait, not yet". He promised that he would do what they wanted, but in the meantime he wanted them to be patient, and make the best of their situation. *To make a difference where they were – to not wait idly, but patiently.* Because even there, where they didn't want to be, he was with them.

Through Jeremiah, God was telling them that he would always be with them, and that he was everywhere. In those days the people believed that God physically lived in his temple in Jerusalem, and because they

were far away from Jerusalem now, they thought that they were far away from God too.

But God told them that if they sought him with all their heart, they would find him – even there, where they would never expect to find Him.

“For I know the plans I have for you” declared the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future.”

The people of God might have ended up in exile because of their own doing, because of wrong choices they made – but that doesn’t mean that God would forget about them. Even in difficult circumstances, God would still be there for them, because he had a plan for them.

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And just like that, God has plans for us too. Plans to prosper us and not harm us, plans to give us hope and a future.

And He’s got these plans for us, even if we find ourselves in places or situations we didn’t want to be in, even if we feel far away from him.

And He’s got these plans for us whether we feel far away from him because of our own doing, or because of circumstances out of our control.

With these words God is giving us something very special: he is giving us hope. Hope for the future.

Because he has plans for us! He wants to use us.

West Kirk:

And especially in this time of Lent, God wants to remind us of his plans for us. He wants to remind us that no suffering is worthless – and we only have to look at Jesus to understand that.

God had a purpose with Jesus' life, and that was to save us all. All of us benefitted immensely from what Jesus went through while he was here on earth, but that doesn't mean that it was easy for Jesus. He was just human, like all of us are, and he sometimes struggled to get to grips with what God wanted him to do.

In the garden of Gethsemane he prayed to God and he asked him not to follow his plan through, to save his life, but God said no. He had to say no, because he had plans with Jesus, plans for all of us. And in order for us to be saved, Jesus had to suffer.

In the end everything turned out fine, the way God planned it. And on the day of his resurrection, Jesus realised that too.

In Jesus God gave us all a future. And this is what we should remember in this time of Lent.

That is why we should pause for a little bit and just remind ourselves again that God is in control. Always. We should walk in the footsteps of Jesus and see how much God loves us. *All* of us.

Polbeth Harwood:

This morning we baptised a baby. And through the baptism, God confirmed his promise that he will always take care of us, from the day we are born until the day we die.

God said:, I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

What a wonderful privilege, to be welcomed into the church, to officially become a member of the family of God. A place where she can constantly be reminded that if she seeks God with all her heart, she *will* find him. That her future is safe and secure, because it is in God's hands.

But God didn't only speak to through her baptism this morning: God also said: and, I know the plans I have for *you*, and and, I know the plans I have for *you*...

Doesn't matter who you are or what your past looks like – in God there is a future for you. God also knows what his plans are for *you*.

And if this plans entail having to wait – please don't think that God has forgotten about you. God promises us that he will never forget about us. *So, if God puts you on hold, don't hang up!*

He might want to use you to make a difference somewhere, he might want to use you to teach someone something, he might want to use you to teach *you* something, to help you grow...

So wait patiently, but not idly. Live your life to the full, even in the times when you feel that you are not living the dream!

But while you are waiting patiently, be excited, because in God there is a future for you. God has plans for you – and this is a promise!

Amen