A New Future

Read Jeremiah 32:2-9, 14-15

Key verse: “The Lord of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Houses, fields, and vineyards will again be bought in this land” (Jeremiah 32:15).

When Jerome Groopman, a professor at the Harvard Medical School, diagnosed patients with serious illnesses, he discovered that those patients were all “looking for a sense of genuine hope and indeed that hope was as important to them as anything he might prescribe as a physician.”

In an article for U.S. News & World Report, Groopman gave this definition of hope: “Basically, I think hope is the ability to see a path to the future. You are facing dire circumstances, and you need to know everything that’s blocking or threatening you. And then you see a path, or a potential path, to get to where you want to be. Once you see that, there’s a tremendous emotional uplift that occurs.”

The doctor added, “I think hope has been, is, and always will be the heart of medicine and healing. We could not live without hope.” Even with all the medical technology we have today, “we still come back to this profound human need to believe that there is a possibility to reach a future that is better than the one in the present.” It has always been so….

In 587 B.C., the Babylonian army was besieging Jerusalem and the prophet Jeremiah had been imprisoned by Judah’s King Zedekiah. This was because Jeremiah had prophesied a sad ending for the king and for Jerusalem. (Nobody likes bad news, even if God sends it.)

At this time, God spoke again to Jeremiah telling him to go and buy a piece of real estate. It appeared to be a foolish time to buy land, since Jerusalem was about to fall and its people be taken into captivity. Yet, God confirmed his instructions to Jeremiah by sending his cousin Hanamiel to make the offer of land to Jeremiah, just as God had foretold (v. 8).

So, in obedience, Jeremiah bought the land and had the deed of purchase sealed in a clay container that would preserve its contents for a long time. Jeremiah’s “foolish” purchase was a tangible sign that, in some 70 years, the Jewish exiles would return to their homeland.
They would rebuild homes and replant vineyards. Jeremiah’s land purchase was meant to provide a beacon of hope during the dark years of captivity and exile.

Bob Seiple, writing in the *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, told how his father, at age 75, planted a number of seedling fruit trees. “What an optimist,” Bob said to his father.

“Dad passed away a few years ago,” added Seiple. “Now when I return to the old homestead, I have an option. I can go to the grassy cemetery on top of the hill and brood over his grave, or I can eat the fruit of his trees and reflect on a man who knew a great deal about hope.”

(Contact Michael at mikesigler@ozarkfumc.org.)