A.M.D.G. 105th Anniversary of West Point Grey United Church Texts: Jeremiah 29:1-14a

 November 12th, 2017 Matthew 6: 25-34

**Jeremiah 29** ….. “These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.  It said:  Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:  Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce.  Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.  For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon’s seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place.  For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me.”

**Matthew 6 ….** *Jesus said,* “So my counsel is: Don’t worry about *things—*food, drink, and clothes. For you already have life and a body—and they are far more important than what to eat and what to wear. Look at the birds! They don’t worry about what to eat—they don’t need to sow or reap or store up food—for your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than they are. Will all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothes? Look at the field lilies! They don’t worry about theirs. Yet King Solomon in all his glory was not clothed as beautifully as they. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won’t he more surely care for you, O  people of little faith! So don’t worry at all about having enough food and clothing. Your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well that you need them. And don’t be anxious about tomorrow. For God will take care of your tomorrows too. Just live one day at a time.

**Give Thanks For Yesterday, Live For Today, Trust God For Tomorrow**

It is 586 BCE, and life is very uncertain for the Jewish people in our scripture reading today from Jeremiah. It was one of the worst catastrophes in the history of God’s people – the holy city, Jerusalem, centre of the Temple and the core of their spiritual lives, reduced to rubble by the conquering Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar – and the once powerful Jewish leaders forced to march into exile, feeling God had utterly abandoned them. The people – totally demoralized, their spirits crushed, any hope extinguished, perhaps for good.

Into the uncertainty of this moment – the prophet Jeremiah sent the letter which we heard this morning. Speaking the word of the Lord, he writes: *“For I know the plans I have for you, ‘says the LORD, “plans for your welfare and not for evil – to give you a future with hope.”* We can only imagine the relief and joy with which the people heard these words!

-2-

And just as their hopes begin to rise from despair – that this may be a distressing, but temporary set-back before they are allowed to return to their homes and lives as before – God, through the prophet Jeremiah, inserts a big **BUT.** And the ‘but’ is – its going to take 70 years.They will have to remain in Babylon, establishing their new lives where they are – setting down roots, building houses, planting gardens, getting married, having children.

In reality – it meant that none in the current generation – no adult reading Jeremiah’s letter – would be alive to see God’s promise come to fruition. They were, instead, to be about the task of planting seeds of hope **now** for future generations to come. They were to make the best of their present circumstances, without looking backward and yearning for what used to be – a past that was over – and trusting in the hope of the future into which God was calling them.

And isn’t that such a relevant word for us here at West Point Grey United as this morning, we celebrate the 105th anniversary of the establishment of this congregation! In looking backward at the past, it is hard not to yearn for the days when there were 787 members and Church School attendance stood at 516! When the church was bustling and bursting at the seams with youth groups like the Canadian Girls in Training, Hi-C, and the Young People’s Union.

But as I hear God’s word for us this morning – like the Jewish people of Jeremiah’s day, we are being urged to honour the past, but not cling to it with longing. To live fully in this present moment, meeting the needs of God’s world today. And then to trust in the promise of God’s tomorrow. Jesus sums it up well in our reading from Matthew’s gospel: “*Don’t worry about anything. God will take care of your tomorrows, too. Just live one day at a time.”*

And so this morning, as we look back at the past – we honour all the saints of this congregation who were willing to take risks, and served faithfully, trusting in God’s promise to guide and sustain them at each moment of the past 105 years. And we celebrate the present – giving thanks for this wonderful, talented, caring, diverse family of faith as we are right now. And we trust God to lead us into the unfolding adventure of faith that is opening up before us in the future – knowing that God will take care of our tomorrows, too. Thanks be to God!