

January 15-16, 2011

Title: *The Not-So-Random Extreme Makeover*

Theme: *God's heart beats a rhythm of restoration and our hearts are invited to join the dance. To petition, give us this day our daily bread, is to move into partnership with God to be a systematic and sustainable answer to this petition for others.*

Text: Jeremiah 33:6-11

Notes on the Text

The year is 587 BC. The city of Jerusalem was being besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon. Within a year the city would fall and its inhabitants would be deported to Babylon. God had called Jeremiah to prophecy to a nation so corrupt and sinful that God needed to tear it down in order to build it back up. Jeremiah was not a popular figure because of his message of judgment.

Not only did he convict the people of their sins of idolatry and injustice he also foretold of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. To make matters worse Jeremiah advised the people to not resist the Babylonian aggression and to live life "as usual" in their captivity. King Zedekiah of Judah was so upset by Jeremiah's message that he imprisoned him, confining him to the courtyard of the guard until Jerusalem fell.

But Jeremiah did not only predict doom and gloom. He also held out a message of profound hope, that the God who loved them too much to allow their sins to rule them would also restore them in due time. Chapter 33 is a word that came to Jeremiah while still under house arrest and it is a powerful picture and proclamation of God's restoration. God promises to heal his people and the land. God's promises:

- To bring the people of Judah and Israel back from their captivity (vs. 7)
- To "rebuild them" probably refers to the people, to reestablish them as a nation again (vs. 7)
- To forgive their sin and rebellion against God

In other words, God promises to restore the people, the land and most importantly their relationship.

God not only does this act of restoration out of love for his people; he also does it for his own glory. God will become famous when all the nations of the earth see God's restoration. The abundance of God's provision and peace will cause people to feel reverent awe before God.

The Babylonians had utterly destroyed the land. They had razed buildings and homes, torn down vineyards and perhaps scorched croplands. The land had become utterly desolate of people, animals and crops. But the restorative power of God will fill the land and the city streets with the kind of joy and noise that is

usually seen and heard at a great wedding feast. In addition the gratitude of the people will resound in the temple, praising God for God's goodness and unending love.

Remember that all of this was being proclaimed while the Babylonians were besieging the city of Jerusalem. They had not yet breached the city walls. They had not yet taken the people captive. The people had not yet been deported. These words of Jeremiah may not have had much meaning until the people were settled in their Babylonian captivity, wondering why God had abandoned them. Jeremiah's message provided the hope the people needed to survive and even thrive.

Preaching Possibilities

While I'm not a fan of reality television I have to admit that for a time I was totally sucked into "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition". Families in the midst of some devastating circumstances applied for a restoration of their homes, and the lucky ones were selected. They were sent on a week's vacation while build-design crews worked 24/7 to restore their homes, transforming broken spaces into places of both function and beauty. The high point of each show was the unveiling of the home makeover to the family. The tears of joy made it clear that more than a house was restored. Lives were restored with hope.

I suspect that the power of the show isn't merely the restoration of physical space. The show taps into a powerful hunger in our lives to experience restoration personally. Biblically restoration often carries a sense of turning or returning to God. In Jeremiah God's restoration follows a period in which God disciplines his people to turn them back to God. As we confess our sins and repent, dying daily to self, God renews our hearts, minds and spirit. We are daily made new, restored by grace.

As people who have experienced the restoration of our lives through the grace, love and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ we are called and empowered to become Jeremiahs...to proclaim with words and with our lives that God is loose in the world restoring all things.

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" we are so often focusing on asking God for what we need, but by praying for "us" and "our" we are also praying that God will provide for all people. This is what our vision for the future at Prince of Peace is all about...engaging people in being agents of restoration (which in and of itself restores us!), and reaching those who hunger for restoration. This is also what we're doing through FMSC. We are literally answering our own prayer, and the prayers of those who really do hunger for daily bread.

[It would be fun to have pictures of both the Extreme Makeover show and FMSC]