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SERMON TITLE: Freedom's Priorities,

Walking as Disciples of Jesus Series

SCRIPTURE: Luke 12:22-34

DATE: February 2, 2020

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read also Jeremiah 32: 9-10, 15-17, 24-27, 42-44. (at end of sermon below) Check out the service at www.fpcd.org

Jeremiah predicted doom for Judah for forty years. That's a long time to focus on the negative, but to God, it's better to tell people what they need to hear than to tell them false information.

Jeremiah was used to the harsh message but one day a different message came. He was to buy property because life was going to return to normal.

This inspired him to pray this prayer: "Dear God, my Master, you created earth and sky by your great power—by merely stretching out your arm! There is nothing you can't do!"

Now mind you, there were siege ramps all around the walls of Jerusalem. Babylon had built huge dirt ramps to the top of city walls, in preparation for taking siege ladders and battering rams up the ramp to attack the city. Disease, starvation and death were at the door.

Yet God said, "Stay alert! I am God, the God of *everything living*. Is there anything I can't do?"

This catastrophe was coming and the country would become desolate. That fact could not be changed. Yet God said, "I will also usher in a wonderful life of prosperity. I promise."

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not.
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.*

Those words of the famous hymn were inspired by a poem written by Jeremiah. The poem is called Lamentations and it is in the Bible. You have a handout of it.

*God's loyal love couldn't have run out,
his merciful love couldn't have dried up.
They're created new every morning.
How great your faithfulness! (Lam. 3:22-23)*

If we look further at the words from Jeremiah and Lamentations, and the famous hymn which is nearly 100 years old, we see some clues about God. We see that God created everything that lives—God defines himself that way. God is a parent who oversees everything living. We see that God has a

dream. God is good and faithful and true. *There is no shadow of turning with Thee.*

God loves this world and God loves us most.

But God also has an enemy. The enemy says God does not care or love. The enemy is death in more ways than one because the enemy tries to destroy.

The enemy proclaims God is not good, faithful or true. The enemy lives among us undoing all that God does.

Yet, sun, moon, stars, spring, harvest—all nature sings life. How old is the world?

Some say 6,000 years. Others say 4.5 billion years.

That makes it even more impressive that there are still fish, birds, wild and domestic animals; trees, forests, deserts, rivers, mountains, snow, wind, rain, fire, male, female, babies . . .

This is a witness to life. Someone cares about this home of ours. There is a parent figure who oversees so that it continues.

Yet the enemy says, "No, he's not really here. He's dead. He's a bad Father. He does not care or love."

Israel, the people chosen to bear Christ, lost their vision. They fell for the enemy's ploy. They turned away. God, however, is not going to lose the hope of this creation, nor is God going to lose that hope, faithfulness, truth, or love that created us in the first place.

When you go home today, look outside. Are there birds? Trees? Sun, moon, and stars? Winter, spring, summer, and Harvest? *All we have needed Thy hand hath provided.*

All nature sings life. So Jeremiah bought a field; took the deed, put it in a jar for safekeeping, and looked forward with hope. Eugene Peterson says, "Hope is buying into what we believe." It would have been easier to do nothing. "It is far easier to languish in despair than to live in hope, for when we live in despair we don't have to do anything or risk anything."¹

What does Jeremiah's action encourage you to hope for? What circumstance might you take a little more risk in? What situation needs a little more hope on your part?

¹ Eugene Peterson, *Run with the Horses*, p. 175.

Despite the problems, God is here. Despite what others might do or not do, God always offers a very encouraging and exciting opportunity in your life.

Jeremiah took 17 silver coins out of his savings jar and paid cash for a piece of land. Mind you, a Babylonian army tank was sitting on his land.

Now that's a risky investment! But he listened to God's words and acted upon them. So you have a good example.

Let's fast forward to the time of Jesus and see what he says about such things. READ Luke 12:22-34

One day a pastor named Bill Gaultiere was having lunch with Dallas Willard. Dallas Willard was a very well-known Christian philosopher and writer at USC. Willard asked him, "How do you describe Jesus in one word. Bill thought for a moment: *Love... Compassion... Holy... Lord... Teacher... Risen... Healer...* all those things you and I might say. Finally, I asked, "Dallas, what's your word for Jesus?" He smiled, "Relaxed."

*Relaxed?*²

That's exactly how Jesus seems in this passage. His advice to us is not to "trust and obey" as the song says, but to "trust and relax." Be free to "trust God and relax."

"Look around," he said. Notice the birds, the flowers, the harvest, the concerns of life. Are you worried? Are you uptight about daily concerns—what to eat, drink, and wear? Relax. That's freedom's priority. Learn to trust.

You can worry if you want, but it will not accomplish anything, not even an added hour to your life. Jesus said it can't even accomplish a small thing.

I am so very convicted by this lesson.

But he gives us the reason and that is what we need to grasp the most. **God cares about you.** God cares wonderfully for the earth, its seasons, plant life, and all within it, so how much more does he delight in you? God loves you. Tom Chisholm, the songwriter of "Great is Thy Faithfulness," says it like this:

God gives *Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,*
God gives *Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;*
God gives *Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,*
These *Blessings [are ours], with ten thousand beside!*

God brings into your life pardon, enduring peace, Jesus' presence to guide and give joy; daily strength and a future full of bright hope—all these are your blessings and there are 10,000 more besides that!

Not only does God do all this, but it gives God great happiness to do all this because God loves you so much.

Do you hold back in faith? Are you fearful and despairing? Or would you consider taking a risk of faith by seeking Jesus Christ above all else even if it looks hopeless?

Jeremiah bought a field for cash. The enemy army was stationed on that land. Jeremiah took a risk because God said, "I am God, the God of *everything living*. Is there anything I can't do?"

What enemy army is stationed on your hope and dreams? Will you take a risk to love God with all your heart and then actively pursue his blessing? That will bring you true treasure, which lasts forever.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father . . .

AMEN

Jeremiah 32:9-10, 15-17, 24-27, 42-44 *The Message* by Eugene Peterson

So I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel. I paid him seventeen silver shekels. I followed all the proper procedures: In the presence of witnesses I wrote out the bill of sale, sealed it, and weighed out the money on the scales. . . . For God-of-the-Angel-Armies, the God of Israel, says, "Life is going to return to normal. Homes and fields and vineyards are again going to be bought in this country."

And then, having handed over the legal documents to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to God, "Dear God, my Master, you created earth and sky by your great power—by merely stretching out your arm! There is nothing you can't do. . . . Oh, look at the siege ramps already set in place to take the city. Killing and starvation and disease are on our doorstep. The Babylonians are attacking! The Word you spoke is coming to pass—it's daily news! And yet you, God, the Master, even though it is certain that the city will be turned over to the Babylonians, also told me, 'Buy the field. Pay for it in cash. And make sure there are witnesses.'"

Then God's Message came again to Jeremiah: "Stay alert! I am God, the God of everything living. Is there anything I can't do? . . . I will certainly bring this huge catastrophe on this people, but I will also usher in a wonderful life of prosperity. I promise. Fields are going to be bought here again, yes, in this very country that you assume is going to end up desolate—gone to the dogs, unlivable, wrecked by the Babylonians. Yes, people will buy farms again, and legally, with deeds of purchase, sealed documents, proper witnesses."

² Bill Gaultiere, "Relaxed" at <https://www.soulshpherd.org/>, accessed January 28, 2020.