

Sermon for May 25, 2025

Easter V

Jeremiah 29:11-14 James 1:22-27 John 16:23b-30

The Israelites were in exile in Babylon when Jeremiah spoke to them these words of God, *“I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”* And the Scriptures go on to say that it is after the Lord gives them hope that they will pray to Him. God will listen to their prayers and let them find Him, when they truly search for Him with all their heart. *“I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity.”* God would let the Babylonians take His people into captivity and exile. He would allow them to stay in Babylon in exile for 70 years. While in exile, he would instill hope in His people for a future in their own country again. With this hope would come earnest prayer and a search for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the only true and living God. Without God's work in them they would have no hope. Without God's work in us to give us faith and hope and love for Him, we would have no no hope and no future.

If we had been alive before Jesus' crucifixion – if we had been present with the disciples and followers of Jesus of Nazareth – would we have had faith and hope – and love? Would the crucifixion have destroyed our faith and our hope and our love? In the days that Jesus spoke of prior, during, and after the crucifixion - faith, hope, and love were hard to come by. Fear ruled among Jesus' disciples and followers. But Jesus spoke of a day to come when joy would overrule fear and sorrow.

He spoke of a day to come when those who believed in Him could ask their Heavenly Father, God the Father, **for anything** in His Name. They needn't ask Him, Jesus, anymore about things and for things. They could go straight to the Father, in His Name, with their requests. *“Until now you have asked nothing in My name.”* The disciples had asked Jesus for lots of things and about lots of things. But they had not asked their Heavenly Father for anything or about anything in Jesus' Name.

“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.” Jesus spoke and taught in many parables which were earthly stories having a heavenly meaning. He spoke in parallel or figurative language so that those who did not believe would not know what He was talking about. He spoke in parallel or figurative language so that believers would understand, not necessarily at the time He spoke or when they first heard his figurative language, but over time and with the work of the Holy Spirit they would understand.

“²⁶In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; ²⁷for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from

God. ²⁸ *I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.*” ²⁹ *His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!”*

Jesus loves us because His Father loves us so much that He sent Him – a spiritual being like His Father - to put on flesh, to live, to suffer and to die for us. Jesus loves His Heavenly Father so much that He obeyed His Father's wishes and will that He enter into the suffering of torment, crucifixion, and death. He would die and leave the world He came to save. He would go to be with His Father in Heaven. Jesus did not use figurative speech when speaking **these** words to his disciples. He spoke plainly to them about what was about to happen to him. This would have a direct effect on what would happen to them as they would be persecuted by the Jews for believing in Him. The disciples commended him for speaking plainly to them. They thought they understood, but subsequent events showed that they did not clearly understand what He meant.

The disciples continued: “³⁰ *Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.*” With these words the disciples - though they did not understand fully all the words that Jesus spoke - did show that they believed that He was divine - that He came from His Heavenly father and their Heavenly Father. They believed that he spoke words that they could depend on when times of persecution and suffering came for them. They believed that Jesus was divine, the Son of the only true and living God.

What about you? Do you believe that Jesus was truly God and Man? Do you believe that He was resurrected and lives, even today? Do you have faith in the things Jesus said? Do you believe that You can pray to the Father in Jesus Name and He will hear and answer your prayers? Do you believe that the Father will forgive your sins when you ask Him to forgive you in Jesus' Name? Do you have hope that Christ Jesus will raise you from the dead when He comes again? Do you have hope that Christ Jesus will take you with Him and all the Saints to heaven after He resurrects you from the dead? Do you love God because He first loved you enough to forgive you by redeeming you? Do you love others enough to forgive them because God loved you enough to forgive you?

What about the waters of your Baptism? Do you believe that Baptism saves you as Jesus said, “*Believe and be baptized and you shall be saved?*” What about this bread? Do you believe that it is truly the body of the Lord given unto death for your sins? What about this wine? Do you believe that this wine is truly the blood of the Lord shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins and the strengthening of your faith? The waters of Holy Baptism, bread that is Holy body, and wine that is Holy blood. The Word of God. These things are given for you. These things create and sustain faith, hope, and love given by God the Father to you and for you through His Son Jesus. God in Christ has done all this for you, Dear Ones. Amen.

BIBLE STUDY

Jeremiah 29:11-14

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

29:11 There was indeed a future and hope in God's plans for the exiled people. However, only after many years would the chastisement produce the desired change in their lives. When they would again turn to the Lord with all their heart, He would keep His promise to bring them back to their homeland.

¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

¹³ And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart.

¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

29:14 *restore your fortunes*. See p 1080.

James 1:22-27

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

1:22–23 Hearing God's Word should lead to application of the Word (cf 2:14–26). A remarkably similar statement is made in Rm 2:13. *the word*. Here refers to just the Law (see notes, vv 21, 25).

1:22 *the word*. OT Scriptures, since the NT was still being written.

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

1:23–24 The mirror of the Word shows us our sin, but even more, it reveals the righteousness we already have in Christ. However, someone who leaves that perfect image by not living a righteous life as taught in the Word turns away from righteousness. "It is necessary to do good works. This does not mean that we merit grace by doing good works, but because it is God's will" (AC XX 27).

²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

1:22–23 Hearing God's Word should lead to application of the Word (cf 2:14–26). A remarkably similar statement is made in Rm 2:13. *the word*. Here refers to just the Law (see notes, vv 21, 25).

1:25 *perfect law ... of liberty*. This Word is perfect because it is from God and makes us perfect and complete (v 4; cf Ps 119:92–94). See "perfect," p 1903; see also p 206. *law*. Here it means "Word" (cf vv 21, 22; see p 971).

²⁶ If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

1:26 *religious ... religion*. In James, religion is not a set of beliefs or a movement, but the deeds that a person does because of his beliefs. Such actions may be in accord with God's will (as in v 27) or, as here, sinful. *tongue*. Cf v 19; 3:1–12. *deceives his heart*. Deceives himself. The person who does not act righteously by controlling his tongue may consider himself righteous, but he is delusional; such behavior does not reflect the righteousness God has given.

²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

1:27 *Religion*. See note, v 26. *orphans and widows in their affliction*. Genuine righteousness seeks to serve others. Orphans and widows deeply need such help, and they were particularly singled out for God's care (e.g., Dt 10:18; Hos 14:3; Lk 7:11–17) and the service of His people (Dt 14:29; 16:11; 24:19). See SC, Fifth Commandment, p xxxv. *unstained from the world*. In Jas, the world encourages values and behaviors that are opposed to God and His

righteousness (3:6; 4:4). Thoughts and actions that come from God are “pure and undefiled”; those that do not come from God destroy the perfect righteousness He gives.

1:19–27 James encourages Christians to return to the Word, take comfort in the Gospel, and live righteous lives focused on service toward others. We also know the kind of lives God calls us to lead. Yet too easily we turn away from that calling. God, who implanted His Word in us and justified us in Christ, now calls us to bless others. He honors us by using us to bring His love to all people, especially those whom the world ignores. • Thank You, Lord, for Your Word. Hold it continually before me, and bring me to hear it preached and taught. May it be rooted deep inside me, that it may transform me into Your righteous servant. Amen.

John 16:23-30

²³ “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

16:23 *ask nothing of Me.* After Christ’s resurrection and ascension, the disciples will pray directly to their heavenly Father.

²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

16:24 *Until now you have asked nothing in My name.* The disciples had asked questions and favors of Jesus but had not prayed to the Father in Jesus’ name.

16:16–24 Christ promises to return after His resurrection and turn the disciples’ sorrow into joy. Human sorrow can become an expression of self-pity, hindering genuine prayer for God’s help and deliverance. Yet, God knows how to turn our sorrow into joy, and He promises to hear our prayers for Jesus’ sake. • Hear us, O heavenly Father, and give us joy in Jesus’ name! Amen.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.

16:25 *figures of speech.* See note, 10:6. *hour.* See note, 2:4.

²⁶ In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you;

²⁷ for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.

²⁸ I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.”

²⁹ His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!

16:29 The disciples thought that they understood, but their understanding remained inadequate.

³⁰ Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.”

16:30 *You came from God.* Although their faith was still deficient, the disciples believed that Jesus’ knowledge proved His divine origin.