

Last week, when we were with our buddy Jeremiah,
he was busy buying property
as everything in Judah tanked.
Babylon is taking over the city,
the royals and officials are being carted away;
the city burns, the Temple is destroyed
—the land itself is ransacked.
Yet, the Lord is telling Jeremiah to buy his cousin's land.
It sounds about as hopeful
as believing George Straight
when he sings
that he has *ocean front property in Arizona*.
It's a little unbelievable.
And even though
it's the worst real estate transaction in Israel,
his action is full of hope.

Both of these passages from Jeremiah 31 and 33
begin with that hope
—*the days are surely coming*, says the Lord...
Jeremiah has spent his prophetic career
explaining the destruction
of God's people and God's city.
And despite the destruction feeling final and permanent,
it is not the prophet says,
because *the days are surely coming*.

You've heard it takes 21 days
to form a new habit, haven't you?
Recent studies however have shown
that it can take
anywhere from 18 days to 254 days!
So anywhere from several weeks to 8 months
to form a new habit.¹

The days are surely coming says the Lord.

¹ <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-long-does-it-take-to-form-a-habit#:~:text=It%20can%20take%20anywhere%20from,new%20behavior%20to%20become%20automatic>

But who knows how many;
how many days to form
that new habit of hope.

Malcom Gladwell says in order to perfect a task,
you'll need 10,000 hours of practice.

Ash Barty, the Number One women's tennis player in the world
and as of yesterday, a Wimbledon champion,
well, when it isn't time for a grand slam
Barty's training looks a bit like this:
"...it's 45 minutes of body preparation work in the morning...
And then straight into a bit
of a movement session
before we go out and practice for two hours.

Then lunch and rest
before either
a gym or conditioning session in the afternoon,
followed by a rehab session.
And then sometimes as well,
we sneak in a second on-court session
if we need to do any extras.

So, [she says] it's a lot of hours
on the court
and in the gym..."²

Half a month or even up to 8;
10,000 hours
of physical practice,
and can you even imagine
the mental skill and pressure
that comes with the mastery of something;
being number 1?

Will it take a month,
or 8 months before hope really sets in?
Will it take two sessions in the morning and the afternoon
and over half your lifetime to be a champion of hope?

² <https://www.womenshealth.com.au/tennis-star-ash-barty-shares-her-winning-training-regime>

Surely the days are coming, says the Lord.

In chapter 33

when Jeremiah speaks these words of hope,
he speaks to them from prison.

Surely the days are coming,
sounds almost blindly hopeful, doesn't?
A little too, rose colored glasses
when everything around is crashing down.

When you are stuck in prison.

When Babylon has torn up all the tennis courts in Jerusalem.

How can the people have hope?

I read a tweet that said,

“Adulging is saying,
‘But after this week
things will slow down a bit,’
over and over to yourself until you die.”

This made me laugh.

There is a part me that hears a similarity
when the Lord says,

Surely the days are coming—
it sounds an awful lot like adulging.

These promised days of hope;
these promised days of restoration;
these promised days of justice and peace;
these promised days of wise rulers to lead the kingdom
these promised days of fair and loving leadership from the
priesthood;

these days are coming?

But when?

How long O Lord?

How long will it take
for this to be a thing?

Will it take 21 days?

Will it take 8 months,

will it take a generation...or more?

Surely the days are coming, says the Lord.
Hope is radical four-letter word.
Hope is “the promise of a future
worth the trouble it takes
to get out of bed in the morning.”³

Surely the days are coming,
when there is a new covenant,
not like the old one
which the people broke;

but a new one where the law of God
isn’t written on stone tablets
but written on human hearts.

For years we Christians have seen the new covenant
as a somewhat of a free pass
or sometimes we have inherited
a false sense of superiority, if you will,
over the old covenant
God had with Israel.

I don’t mean you Christians,
you are smarter than that,
but some of our brothers and sisters in the faith
have misread what is being said here.
As one professor put it,
“Christians came to see themselves
as the New Israel displacing the Old Israel
in God’s economy of salvation.”⁴

But these new promises
are reminiscent of the old.
Jeremiah’s task is
to build the muscle of hope,
to build the habit of hope in God’s people
with the old and new covenantal promises of God.

³ Rolf A. Jacobson, Ed. *Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffey Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Augsburg Books, Minneapolis, MN 2008) pg.88

⁴ Margaret Odell, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/reformation-day/commentary-on-jeremiah-3131-34-14>

God states twice

that the new covenant will not be like the old,
yet the continuity and change of the language
implies that there needs to remain a relatedness
between these two covenants.

The old covenant stated
God's faithfulness **to the**
people;
and what was broken
was the people's faithfulness **to God.**

So, this new covenant
that is promised
is not new from God's standpoint,
rather it is a reiteration
of the steadfast faithfulness of God.

God will write the law

not on stone but on flesh;
the hearts of all people will hold God's law
—which should have sounded familiar to God's people.

Back in Deuteronomy 6,

God tells the people,
"Keep these words
that I am commanding you today
in your heart.

Recite them to your children
and talk about them
when you are at home
and when you are away,
when you lie down
and when you rise."

The people had already been given the words
to put in their hearts
...the issue is, of course,
they just didn't do it.

So, the 'heavy lifting' of the covenant has always been on God;
God is the continuity of the old to new.

Where the covenantal language changes
is that ***all people***
will have access to this law on their hearts.
Not just this people of Israel,
but all people will have it;
and all people will be able to act on it.
And what continues is,
this covenant is to be seen through,
not the *nation* of Israel,
but to the *house* of Israel.⁵

Because the nation was no more.
They were a scattered and defeated people.
The 10 tribes were lost.
Jerusalem had fallen.
The Temple was no more.
But *surely the days are coming*
...when this new promise
would be the relationship God had
with all God's people
who would be living everywhere.

The hope in God's steadfastness
was how the old and new covenant
remained together.

Jeremiah reminds the people
of the faithfulness of God,
and the relationship with God
that comes from the law
being written on the people's heart
stresses an internalizing of the covenant.

No longer will you need to go
to a place and see a visible reminder of the covenant,

Your heart is the reminder of the covenant.

⁵ R.E. Clements, *Jeremiah: Interpretation Series: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press, Atlanta, GA 1988) pg. 191 (*italics added*)

It requires a people of God
to think a new way,
to hope a new way.

It requires the house of Israel
to remember again
that having the law on their hearts
means they recite it to their children
and talk about it
when they are at home
and when they are away.

And then organically this relationship grows and flourishes
between God and God's people
so that when we get to Jesus
—because after all we are Christians,
when we get to Jesus
he explains,
'oh no, I'm not doing away with the law at all
—I'm here as the fulfillment of the law—
the embodiment of the law of God written on flesh.

I am God's law and word
walking around
reminding you that God
has not forsaken you, ever.'

Last week Whit talked about
proclaiming the stories of Jesus
so that you would have them
when you needed them.

That's what writing God's word
on your heart looks like.

I did a funeral on Wednesday at Bass-Smith
for a woman that I'd never met.

And I reminded the family and friends there,
that it didn't matter that I'd never met Lucille
because as a preacher
it wasn't my job to tell you everything about her
—it was my job to remind them

of the hopeful promises of God
written on their hearts.

So, church.

Remember the promises of God.

Remember that the covenant God has
with all God's people doesn't go away.
No matter what happens in life.

It might be that you are carried away
from the people and places you love.

It might be that the whole nation
suffers crippling divisions.

It might be that the whole world
suffers a pandemic.

But the promises of God do not fail.

Jeremiah tells the people what God's promise is:

"I have loved you
with an everlasting love;
God says, "therefore I will continue
my faithfulness to you."

Surely the days are coming
when we as God's people will live, **not up to** the covenant,
for that is the old way...

but *surely the days are coming*
when we as God's people can live, **fully into** the covenant,
for that is the new way.

Surely the days are coming, is hopeful.

Hope is something we can't just generate
from the inside,
but it grows in us
when a promise is spoken from the outside.⁶

So, hearing the promise from God first,
means the words of God turn up
written on the flesh of our hearts.

It may take 18 days or 254 days or years.

But do not lose hope.

Surely the days are coming, says the Lord.

Put in your practice hours;

take the trouble

to get out of bed in the morning

and look at what is already

always been written on our hearts.

⁶ Rolf A. Jacobson, Ed. *Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Augsburg Books, Minneapolis, MN 2008) pg.88