



August 14, 2020

Dear friends and members of Glory Lutheran Church,

About 600 years before Christ, the city of Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonian army. The prophet Jeremiah told the people that this was God's punishment for their disobedience and idolatry. Jerusalem would be destroyed, he predicted, and the people taken into captivity. The king and the priests of Judea didn't like that message and arrested Jeremiah. During his confinement, however, God told the prophet to buy a certain piece of land, a field belonging to his cousin Hanamel. Land was a sign of the covenant God had made with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. As long as the people followed the statutes of the Lord, the holy land would produce "milk and honey" for the people. If they disobeyed, the land would suffer or be lost.

According to Israelite law, Jeremiah had the first right of refusal in purchasing this field from his cousin. This was called the right of redemption. However, this was a very tricky decision under the circumstances, given the fact that Judea was overrun by the Babylonians, the capital was under siege, and Jeremiah himself was under arrest in Jerusalem. It seemed like the exact wrong time for Jeremiah to invest money in a land purchase. And yet God instructs him to buy the field. So, the money is exchanged, and the deed containing the terms and conditions is signed and sealed by the parties and witnesses of the sale. A copy is made, also signed, and the deed is filed away securely in a clay jar, to preserve it for generations to come. "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land." (Jer. 32:15)

Jeremiah's land purchase was an act of hope in a moment of collective and personal crisis. It symbolized God's promise of restoration for the nation of Judea and God's intention for the whole land. Glory Lutheran Church has purchased a field from our "cousins" in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. We had the first right of refusal. Because of the present economic situation, there was no one else who would buy it. We believe this was God's way of telling us to step out in faith. We live in a time of many crises, physical, psychological and economic. The land is critical in our relationship to God and for our wellbeing. The loss of creeks and wetlands, topsoil and native forest, and the numerous losses tied to these, mean that our side of the covenant with God is in trouble. Much land around our cities has been eaten up by commercial interests, the empire of our time. So much of it has been sacrificed as pavement for cars. As Christians, however, we proclaim that the earth and everything in it is the Lord's. We share God's grand vision for creation, the restoration of the garden, the just sharing of the earth with all its creatures and with future generations. This beautiful corner of the agricultural parkland with its creek and birds, trees and wildlife, meadow and garden plots, may serve as an oasis in an environment that often seems parched of hope and life.

Our congregation is poised to step out in faith to gather the funds required for the purchase of this land. Like the prophet Jeremiah we are confined, because of the pandemic, and this may seem like the wrong time. However, like Jeremiah, we are a people of hope. Especially in a time like ours, hope is hard to come by. God has given us a hope beyond what we can see. Paul says in Romans 8 that "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of God's children... For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope.... But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

We express this hope for creation and for God's children with the purchase of these remaining acres of the land. Followers of Christ don't put their hope in the forces of the market or in their personal autonomy, but as children of God we put our hope in the creator who called us to act together with God for the redemption of the world. Our stewardship committee is inviting us to express this hope by contributing to the purchase whatever we can in small or large amounts. I believe these our acts of faith will be blessed and will contribute to the mission of God to our community and to the world at large. I encourage you to step out in faith and participate in our effort to raise the money needed to complete the purchase of this land.

Pastor Markus Wilhelm