

Pastoral Letter – August-September 2020

From The Rev'd John Saxon



Dear friends

I have recently been reminded of an often-quoted verse from scripture. It is Jeremiah 29:11, “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” These are frequently shared as words of encouragement at times of change. Dawn and I received a marble plaque bearing this verse as a wedding gift and it still stands on our mantelpiece today. We would never have guessed all these years later that we would be here in Saffron Walden serving in the team ministry as a vicar and wife.

For me particularly, these words are a comfort and a challenge. Some of you may know, ordained ministry is a third career path for me! I completed about 15 years each as a paramedic and a teacher, finishing at a school for young people with profound and multiple educational special needs. Jeremiah’s words comforted me in these times of my career changes.

However, that familiar verse is a challenge too if we read it in context. Jeremiah, writing at the time when the Jewish leaders were in exile in Babylon, says in verse 10 that Babylon’s 70 years need to be complete before the Lord brings about the exile’s return to Jerusalem. God’s plan for us is not reassurance that we will have a comfortable life. After all, Jesus said ‘Take up your cross and follow me!’ Then the following verses challenge us to seek the Lord in difficult times too. Verses, 12 and 13 say “When you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.” In difficult times it is in our seeking and wholehearted following that God’s plans are revealed and worked out in our lives. Changing career three times was not always easy, but in response to God’s leading it has revealed more of his plan for my life.

I bring these thoughts to mind because this year has been one of unparalleled interruptions and uncertainties. For many, the hoped-for holidays have been cancelled; the anticipated exams with so much preparation and hard work already done haven’t been able to take place and the longed-for career promotions and business opportunities have been shattered, for some never to return again. Our future plans and dreams have been thrown into the air as a result of the pandemic and we are still in the grip of an unknown future.

So, take comfort from Jeremiah’s words: God has a plan for you in whatever circumstances you find yourselves. Be challenged too, to seek God’s will for your life – wholeheartedly. We may never dream of where we will end up, but we can be assured our welfare is at the heart of all that God has for us and that we have a future full of hope.

With every good wish for your future – God has a plan for you.

John

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