

Ser21-1 "The Future" 1-3-1 TUCC 2nd sun after Christmas

Jer 31:7-14; John 1:10-18

My friends, if this worship today is about anything at all, it is intended to be about the future. Certainly, we all need to be in the here and now present moment of this worship. Even so, I bet some of you are still stressing about something that happen yesterday or last week or last month. Something that upset you or disappointed you. Others may, indeed, be wholly in the future, stressing out about that project you have to do or those awful tests in school on Monday. OR excited about an upcoming outing. Some just wondering what's for supper tonight.

Story of goose hitting my windshield – Thurs – I was on the way to see my tax accountant and worrying a little, feeling tired, maybe a little bit sorry for myself. AND WHAM. BAM – Something big with wings hit my windshield – spreading cracks all over the middle of it, almost shattering it. It was a goose. About 8 or 10 were taking off near the side of the road and one didn't make it. That woke me out of little pity party and got my attention. It was only when I came into the office and was telling Susan about this that she reminded me of the poor goose. Oh, yes, I thought I was having a bad day...what about that goose? Feathers are still flying. Not much hope for that goose.

The future, by definition, hasn't happened yet; it lies ahead. No matter the future is about HOPE, and Hope is about the future. Each intertwined with the other. Having high expectations about something you desire. Let me ask you: How is it with your hope this morning? Indeed, how is it with your soul

today? Have you come to church expecting something good to happen? Here today? Tomorrow? This winter? Are you hoping to be more loving or to be more loved by another?

To all those longings I would offer this blessing from poet, John O'Donohue: "For Longing" p. 35 in "To Bless the Space Between Us" (read from the book) *"TO COME HOME TO YOURSELF May all that is unforgiven in you Be released. May your fears yield Their deepest tranquilities. May all that is un-lived in you Blossom into a future Graced with love."*

– John O'Donohue, To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Invocations and Blessings

In our text from Jeremiah this morning, God is longing. The people were forgetting again how to live in loving ways. They were forgetting God's promises. They were losing their hope. And so, God calls on Jeremiah, even when Jeremiah was just a young person—not even a grown up yet.

"They need more help," God thought. "I promised that I would take care of the earth and all living things. I will always be with my people." "I promised that from Abraham and Sarah would begin a huge family – as many as all the stars in the sky – that would become the people of God

"Now it's time to give them another promise," God thought. "They need my love and my help." "And so, God tells Jeremiah, "I'm going to make a new promise. I want you to take this message to my people. Listen carefully." And then God told Jeremiah what to say, "I promise that my people will know me so well that they will never forget me. I will give them a heart that helps them

know how I want them to be with each other. Deep down they will know my loving ways.”

Jeremiah listened to God. Then Jeremiah talked to the people. Soon the people began to listen. Soon the people began to know God’s promises. And whenever the people wondered about God’s way, and about what choices they should make, they would wait and listen.

Both these texts—Jeremiah offering to fill our hearts with hope; Jesus guaranteeing our future before God—are texts for the future.

For some of us, this may require change – to change from being religious to being in relationship with Christ; to change from despair to hope; to change from living as victim to living as victor; to change from the head to the heart; to change the usual debates and arguments to make ourselves right and everybody else wrong about religious and worship practices, theology, polity, and sin to conversations about what we hold in common....about what we can achieve together.

The **good news** for today is that we have this One we call Jesus to hold our hand. We have the God of Jesus – the God of past, present and future--- The God of hope and relationship. The **good news** today is that we have God’s promise that we can know God so well that we will never forget God and God will not forget us. The **good news** today is that God gives us a hope that helps live into the future to which God is leading us. May it be so in your lives and in mine this day. Amen