

Jeremiah 29:10-14

For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. 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. Then 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, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Luke 6:37-38

'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.'

Matthew 11:25-30

At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

“Grow Where You Are REplanted”**Rev. David Dalke****July 11, 2010**

My dad grew up on a farm. My cousins still farm, and when I served churches in Kansas, many of the people that were members of those churches were farmers, and I think about them. I think about them this time of year particularly, because I know those combines are out in the field, and I know the wheat is being dropped into the beds of the trucks and the trucks are moving down the old country roads, they're going to the mill, they're going to the elevators, and the farmers are probably praying all the way, that we hope we have enough good many bushels of wheat to the acre. It's how they make their living. I wasn't sure what happened to the land after farmers would be out there, and they would be harvesting the wheat. I didn't know what the heck would happen to the land. So I checked with my resident farming guru here at the church, Forrest Walters.

And I said, "Forrest, what happens to the land?" He says, "Well, some farmers foul the land." They foul the land. That was a new term to me. He said, "They'll go in there and they'll spread herbicides over where the wheat was, and kill the weeds, and then they'll leave the stubble, and the stubble will gather the moisture and the snow, and it will help when the disk the land a little bit later, then that stubble goes underneath and it makes the

land moist and it gives some sustenance to the earth. And then when they smooth the land out, they're ready to drill once again with the wheat, and hope for another harvest, and hope for a good harvest.

Well, Jesus lived in that kind of a time, when people were of the land, and I don't think they were probably as sophisticated as I just described to you, but they were an agrarian society where people owned their land, and they made their money off the land. It's not surprising Jesus used the metaphors of the farm and of harvest and of the land. In his parables and his talks to people on the hillside, he would say, "The harvest is plentiful out there, but the laborers are few." The harvest for Jesus were the people. The people that were out there, they were the ones. He said, "We need to bring them in, harvest them, bring them into the kingdom, the kingdom of forgiveness and acceptance of love, of caring for one another. Bring them in." But the laborers were few, and so he didn't always succeed. Just like a lot of farmers today don't always have a good crop. For Jesus, the crops, the lives of the crops, the lives of the people, the harvest, didn't always make it. So that phrase that we say so much, "Grow where you're planted," had a great meaning for these people back then, and for people of today, now, who farm. They wanted to grow where it's planted, but it doesn't always happen.

I don't know what preachers would do without bumper stickers, or cute phrases that come across computers, but I read one the other day that said, "Life is all about how you handle Plan B." That life is all about how we handle Plan B. Which means that Plan A probably is a figment of our imagination. It means it probably didn't succeed. Plan A, when we started out, probably didn't make it, and now we're thrust into Plan B, and it can be simple things. Students enrolling in their classes, and you've got a requirement to take and you find out that the class is full. Oops, Plan B. You have a favorite recipe that you want to make for everybody that's coming for the meal, and you go to the store to get the secret ingredient and they're out. Plan B.

AJ alluded to a Plan B this morning. When you came to church and LeMay and Prospect were closed, Plan B. But it gets heavier than that sometimes. Think of the people that have stood at these altars and said "For better or for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish," and they don't love and cherish. And all of a sudden lives are shattered and people are thrust into a place where they're now into a Plan B, they've got to think "How do we grow now, where we are re-planted?" Young men play on a hockey arena, here in our community. Only two days later one of them dies of meningitis, and a few days later another one dies of meningitis. Families are thrust into a place that says, "We don't know how to grow where we're planted. We didn't count on that. Plan A was beautiful, and now we're in Plan B and maybe beyond."

We have friends, family, that have lingering illnesses, and finally, finally their bodies give out, and we all have to say Plan B. How do I adjust, how do I keep moving forward? And it's hard sometimes. It's very, very difficult. We walked those streets in San Francisco, from our hostel there on Ellis Street, four blocks down to Glide United Methodist Church, and we would walk around people that were sleeping on the streets. We'd see them standing in lines around the block for food. Their belongings on their

backs, some of them in grocery carts, all they had, waiting for a meal. I wonder, did they start out that way? Probably not. Somewhere along the way, something happened to them. A Plan B took over. They had to start to try to make sense out of life, and this is the best they knew. It's not unusual for us right here, folks, to walk out of this sanctuary today and see someone sleeping under our trees in a sleeping bag. We see that daily as we walk out from these offices. I don't know whether they started out that way. Or people that sleep up on our roof. They're there. I hope we're a quality inn or a super saver.

And the people that come down and line up at the office here for Lynne and Judy, daily they walk in. Some of us come out of our rooms and we hear their stories of desperation. I don't think they started out that way. Now they're into a Plan B, they're into a place that says "How do I grow where I'm planted now?" It's difficult, it's so hard.

The year is 1809, and two farmers in Larue County, Kentucky meet. Their horses converge, the farmers meet in this country road and they talk for a little bit, exchange courtesies, and finally one of them says, "Hey, is anything happening in your home town?" "No, nothing much happens in our home town. What about you?" "Nah, you kidding me? Nothing exciting ever happens in our town." So they chit-chat a little more, and they part, and as they're galloping away one of them stops and turns around and says, "Wait a minute, come here, come here, wait a minute. Something did happen in our home town last night, I forgot to tell you that. Not really very exciting, however. Old Tom Lincoln, Tom Lincoln and his wife Nancy had a little baby boy. Called him Abraham. They called him Abraham, but nothing exciting happens in our home town."

And that little boy probably lived a lot of his life out of a Plan B. I think lots of us live out of Plan B. He grew up and he fought the wars of social injustice and slavery, but it didn't happen just when he got older. Look what happened to him when he was a child at age 3. His brother dies. At age 9 his mother dies. She's only 35 years old. As he's 19 Sarah dies, his sister, and Abe Lincoln has a little reprieve in there, because at age 33 he gets married to Mary Todd, and they have some children. And not long after that, little Edward dies just shy of his fourth birthday. And he goes to the White House, and William dies at age 11. Now tell me, how do we survive all that? How do you survive all of your times when you are asked to grow where you are re-planted? When you didn't count on life taking all those detours and changes for you.

It's very difficult. It's hard, and we have a choice. We can curl up, we can curl up and just dies inside, and say "Life isn't worth it for me any more. I don't like the plans that change for me." We can do that. Or we have a second choice. We can also take the words of Jeremiah, who talked to the people that had been in Babylon for 70 years in exile. He looked at them and he said, "I know you don't like what's happening to you. But you don't have to grind it out, you can live it out," he said. He said, "You must face your sadness. Face your disappointment. Face your disillusionment. Face all those things you didn't count on. Believe there's a God who loves you and will see you through all this. But you've got to face it and be real with it. Cry it out, laugh it out, shout it out." And he told those people in exile, he said, "What I want you to do, I want you to build your houses and live in them. I want you to plant your gardens and eat. And I want you to marry and

have children. And I want you to embrace what's going on in that wicked city of Babylon with your goodness. Find the goodness amidst the evil," he said. In essence, he was saying get off of your life's mat and sniff the smelling salts of hope and courage. That's what he was saying.

A priest and a rabbi went to see this boxing match and the fighter in the corner before the bell rang went down on one knee and crossed himself. The rabbi says to the priest, "Will that do any good?" And the priest says, "Well, if he can punch, it will." And that's what it's all about. And that's what Cecil Williams faced down there at Glide in San Francisco. He's been there 40 years as their pastor. He says it has not ever been easy. It's never been easy. He's had failures and failures, but he said, "I've learned through those." He was in Plan B a lot of his live. He was willing to grow where he was replanted regularly, and he said "The reason I made it, the reason I got through it, I had 12,000 people around me to help me do it." And we do too. We have each other. That's what the church is all about. We have each other to get through the times when we have to grow where we're replanted. When life is hurting us, and sad, and we don't know whether we can make it. We have each other. We can yoke and pull together, and that's what Jesus said. He said, "My yoke is easy for you, just put it around there, it's guidance, it'll get you there." He knew what yokes were. He made those out in the carpenter shop. I'm sure he went out in the fields and attached them to the oxen as they went down the furrow to the land. We can yoke and pull together. We're not alone. We're not alone. We've got a God who loves us, and we've got each other. That's a lot.

My wife's mother is here this morning. Beth is sitting over there. She just slipped under the pew. She's 91 years old, comes and sees us every now and then. She was here earlier. We'd been moving from one side of town to the other, she came in May, and the reason she came in May, she said, from Nebraska, she wanted to come to Colorado when it was good weather. How many days did it snow in May? So she came and we started unpacking boxes, and we would unpack this box and we'd put stuff away and then we'd crush the box, and we'd unpack and crush another box, and she would help us and we'd organize, and we were having a great time. I think it's great to unpack boxes. I don't know about you, but there's something cathartic about that, something good. You get them out of the box, you put them away, you crush the box, and you get it out of the house. That feels to good to me. Might have something to do with my sense of order, I don't know.

So we have all these boxes crushed, and we put them in the back of the car, and Beth rode in the front seat, Cheryl was in the back, and we went over to Rivendell School where we were going to go to the recycle place, and we recycled our boxes. And just as we finished, I was sitting in the car, Cheryl started to get in, and a van pulled up. A van. A young woman got out, and she had loads of recycling. Lots of boxes, and they weren't crushed. Lots of them. So Cheryl stayed out there and started helping her unload the boxes. And Beth leaned over to me and said, "That's just like that Cheryl. She just loves to help people." I said, "Yeah, that's true." Then I noticed something strange. I noticed as they were unloading those boxes and crushing some, there were some that Cheryl held up and tested them, put them over by our car. And pretty soon, we had boxes all over the street there at Rivendell by the car, and she comes up to me and says, "Would you pop

the trunk please?" And I pop it, and she loads all these boxes in there, puts a bunch in the back seat, and we go home with more boxes than when we went. And I could not believe that. And we're driving away, and Beth starts to laugh, and she says, "Isn't there a Scripture about this?" And I said, "I think there is. We read it this morning. The measure you give, will be the measure you get back. Only maybe more."

And that's what life is. That's what it's like to grow where we're replanted. Sure, we have to give something, but we'll get a lot more back than we ever counted on. Than we ever counted on.

Well, you're going to leave here this morning. You never lived this day before, neither have I. I don't know what the plan will be. I know what I'm going to start out with, and so do you. You may have a Plan A going right now. But all of a sudden, you might be into Plan B, and you might be asked to grow where you're re-planted. And we have two choices. We can reject it, we can be upset with it, we can be mad, we can check out of life, we can say "I don't want any more of this." Or we can embrace it, and we can flow with it, and we can meet our sadnesses and our happinesses. And we can be honest about what we feel, and know we're going to get through it, because there's a man who said to us years and years ago, and it was a staggering statement really, he said, "Come unto me. Come unto me, all of you who labor in your fields, and I will give you rest," he said. And a little boy said to his parents, "Just because you can't see air, it doesn't mean you stop breathing." And just because our plans change and life takes on those twists that we didn't count on, and we're asked to grow where we're replanted, it doesn't mean that we stop believing. Amen.