

What to Remember When Fear is Strong
August 28, 2008

In my time of devotions this past week, I have been reading a lot of the fall of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem. It was a scary time. It was a time when the familiar was changing. It was a time of great fear.

The nation had been over run by foreigners (The Babylonians). Some tried to just wash over it, saying God was going to provide a miracle and save them. They even said, "We don't even have to fight. God will fight for us."

Jeremiah though, gave a different message. His message was at times harsh. He said, "Our unfaithfulness has brought this upon ourselves." He didn't pull punches. He said, "God will not deliver us. We will suffer."

Destruction came. People suffered.

We live in a world where there are people suffering. They are facing health issues. They are facing economic issues. You might even be struggling, even suffering as you read this today.

In this past year, as our family has suffered and struggled with how to deal with the death of Whitney and Isaac's involvement in that. There are times I have even wondered, "God, why is this happening to us? Why aren't the legal issues easily being resolved? Why do we have to go to trial?"

Unfortunately, I haven't come up with a lot of answers to the questions I have posed. I just know I have been hurting, some times more than others.

In one of the readings recently, I came upon a letter that Jeremiah wrote to the exiles in Babylon. He told them to settle down in the new land. He told them that they were to remain faithful to God and begin to rebuild their lives. Then he said something that has come to mean a lot to me, he said on behalf of God, "I know what I am planning for you (says the Lord), I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future (Jeremiah 29:11)."

I was reminded in that letter, that a time of suffering will end. A time of pain will end. Even though I may not feel like it at the moment, God is at work, even now to bring hope and healing. God is at work even now to bring a new future together.

In my life, healing is occurring. It comes through like rays of light shining through the dark clouds to remind me that the hurt is slowly changing and it is not as strong as it was. Good memories that bring a smile to my face come more frequently. On Saturday, which would have been Whitney's 18th Birthday, many in the family are getting a tattoo to help us remember Whitney and her life.

I find that I take comfort in the words, *I know what I am planning for you (says the Lord), I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future.* I will keep trusting the Lord. I invite you to do so with me.

In the hope Jesus offers us,

Rev. Scott Carlson

The Mission of Sun Prairie United Methodist Church is to invite and welcome people to be committed and compassionate followers of Jesus Christ through worship, through spiritual growth, through fellowship and through service to others.