

The Immanuel *Light* Abridged

APRIL 20, 2020

For the Living of These Days

The prophet Jeremiah could be a thorn at times. Not a formidable thorn, if there is such a thing. Cleaning out a fencerow recently, a rather large brier passed across my face.; they are not easily ignored.

No pastor would last being as severe, as harsh towards his/her people, as was Jeremiah on occasion. The Old Testament prophet's gestures and mimicry were as sharp as his tongue. Take the time he broke a bottle to demonstrate God would break those who disobey His will. Jeremiah was not the easiest pastor to live with.

His understanding of suffering was his redemptive quality. Jeremiah held that Israel's hardship at the hands of Babylon, though inevitable, did not need to be meaningless. The lone thing worse than misery would be meaningless misery. The late Elie Wiesel contended that the meaning has to be found in the suffering itself.¹

One example is timely in its application. Jeremiah preached that in the midst of a national catastrophe, one must continue to do the things that make life possible. One must exert himself/herself to avoid being overwhelmed. We may not be the authors of our lives, but we remain the narrator, always. Life might be circumscribed by a crisis, but we must continue to teach and study, bake and sell bread, plant gardens and count on the future.

Jeremiah was a scratching presence, maybe even neurotically so at times. Nevertheless, the priest from Anathoth hit the nail on the head regarding perseverance. How one lives during periods of pressure, stress and peril is the defining moment for his/her faith. He called for the Israelite exiles in Babylon to settle down to a normal social life. The new existence consisted of building houses, planting gardens for the production of food,



marrying and giving in marriage for the purpose of having children. These were long-term projects with designs on an open-ended future.

These days we keep one eye fixed on the horizon. We wait for hints of some light at the end of the tunnel, even if a flicker of light. Daily, we go through the mental gymnastics necessary so as not to be overwhelmed by the circumstance that besets us. We hope. Yet, hope is not the victory. Hope informs our behavior during the pressure, stress, and peril.

With most people confined to their homes, people are throwing themselves headfirst into long-term projects. I have heard from more than one individual who has cleaned out an attic or made a small home repair. The victory garden made popular in WW I and WW II is making a robust comeback. Seed companies are reporting a run on seeds. Last, but not least, I am officiating a wedding this coming Saturday. The bride and groom have revised their wedding blueprint to comply with the "10 participants or less" social distancing guideline. As the officiant, I will stand six feet from the couple and will forego holding the rings (I will hold a plate upon which the rings rest). Building, planting, marrying—each provide an example of the behavior Jeremiah prescribed.

In the living of these days, we do not wait for the pandemic to end. We do not take refuge in the future. We live in the present. We shall work in the present, on the present. We build, plant, marry and give in marriage. In this lies our hope. Even now, I am anticipating the taste of this summer's first tomato.

—Steven



¹Wiesel, Elie. Five Biblical Portraits. P.119.

An Update from Family Reconciliation Center

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Family Reconciliation Center closed March 11 and will remain closed through the month of April. Prisons across Tennessee are closed to visitors.

House managers Anna and Jason Rodriguez Masi check in with their clients regularly to make sure everyone is safe and well, and to receive updates on the health of their inmates.

“This is not how we imagined spending spring at the guest house: every guest bedroom empty, no Saturday night dinners. These walls were built to hold a bustling, vibrant community, and for years that’s just what they’ve done. We remind ourselves that this is just temporary and that things will eventually return to normal. When we re-open, our clients will be scrambling to book reservations and come see their inmates.”

In the meantime, if you find yourself in a position to be gener-

ous, consider helping the Family Reconciliation Center keep the lights on and the gas fund ready for their clients.

Their mailing address is:
Family Reconciliation Center
4908 Kentucky Avenue
Nashville, TN 37209-2212



*In the bulb there
is a flower . . .*



PRAYER LIST

- Evelyn Brandon
- Greg Sharpe
- We’ve just learned that 15 residents and six staff members at Bordeaux nursing home (Nashville Community Care and Rehabilitation) have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. This is the nursing home regularly visited over the past 74 years by a group from Immanuel. Please join our “donut ladies” in praying for all of the residents and staff, with perhaps extra concern for those individuals with whom they have years-long relationships.

Reminders

- You should have received a letter from the church regarding voting for church officers and deacons, as well as voting on the committee roster for 2020-2021. **Please return your completed ballots to the church office by Saturday, April 25.**
- We mailed your pledge card to you two weeks ago. If you have not yet returned yours to the office, it would be helpful to the Stewardship Committee if we could receive it by Friday, April 24. Thank you



Immanuel Baptist Church

The mission of Immanuel Baptist Church is to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to deepen our love for God and others, to fully engage our neighbor, and to wholeheartedly serve those on the margins of society.

God is calling Immanuel Baptist Church to practice the radical, compassionate discipleship taught by Jesus Christ.

Pastor
 Steven Meriwether
 smeriwether@ibcnashville.org

Minister of Music
 Caroline Talbert
 kimreycb@gmail.com

Minister of Youth
 Andrew Tonks
 atonks@ibcnashville.org

Organist
 Richard Shadinger
 richard.shadinger@belmont.edu

Music Associate
 Marilyn Shadinger
 mwshadinger@comcast.net

Secretary/Editor
 Deborah Maxwell
 dmaxwell@ibcnashville.org

Financial Secretary
 Jenny Dean
 jdean@ibcnashville.org

Secretary
 Ann Conn
 aconn@ibcnashville.org

Parents’ Day Out Director
 Becky Atkinson
 kentuckyfan80@comcast.net

Pastor Emeritus
 David George

Minister of Music Emeritus
 Beryl Vick