

Epiphany 4, January 31, 2016

“I’ve Got Plans for You!”

Jeremiah 1:4–10 (17–19) and Jeremiah 29:11



Dear Friends in Christ

Grace and Peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I’m sure that at some point or another you, we all have wondered if God would have a sense of humor and if he did, what would make him laugh? Somebody said these words: "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your future plans." Tell Him your future personal plans and what you can achieve on your own."

Why would he laugh? Because His plans are always better and God’s Word tells us that He does have a plan for each of our lives.

God didn’t just create us and then after the sixth day Creation he ceased all creative activity. Or that after creating Adam and Eve everything else was going to be a human affair.

On the contrary, the Scriptures, particularly our Old Testament Reading for today, tell us that God is intimately involved in the creation of every human life. For human life is part of God’s own master plan, and he’s got plans for every life. Yes, every life! God has plans for you! The question is, are we ready to submit to God’s plan for our lives in total obedience, or not?

In our Old Testament reading today we see that God had a plan for Jeremiah. His story begins in chapter 1, where Jeremiah being still a young man, God calls him to be His prophet. Now, in spite of the honor God bestows on Jeremiah by his calling, Jeremiah is reluctant to serve God. In fact, his first response is that he’s too young and inexperienced (v 6). God, of course, knows best, and he will make sure Jeremiah is able to fulfill the task he’s given. Showing him first that God has a plan for his life and only after showing it in Jeremiah’s life God later on will say to all his people through the same prophet Jeremiah: “I know the plans I have for you . . . to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11), hereby confirming his plans for Jeremiah and for all his people.

It is hard to conform with God’s plans, isn’t it. Without saying it Jeremiah hints at this when he says: “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” (Vs. 6) Jeremiah is afraid, isn’t he. Who wouldn’t be after all his own people were headed for judgment as a result of their disobedience of God’s commands. In fact, that will be his message to them. And since his people persecuted previous unpopular prophets, Jeremiah perhaps fears the same for himself. But God will not be deterred; his plan have been set “before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Vs. 5)

After all, God “knew” Jeremiah intimately from eternity. Before Jeremiah was conceived in his mother’s womb, and even prior to the creation of the world, God had a plan for him. God “consecrated” Jeremiah for his purposes and “appointed” him to be his “prophet to the nations” before his birth (v 5). Then God’s plan continued to unfold

when Jeremiah was conceived in his mother and while he was being formed in his mother's womb.

Now God would place his own message on Jeremiah's lips (vv 7–9). His message would certainly be one of judgment. For the nation of Judah had rejected God. Injustices abounded, the poor were neglected, and even human sacrifice was practiced. God's patience finally ran out, as it does for every unrepentant nation. Judah would face destruction. Nevertheless, God would ultimately send a Savior, whom Jeremiah would also promise the people.

Jeremiah's calling has implications for every human life. It tells us that life is conceived in eternity by God before it is conceived within a mother's womb. In fact, the Lord's words to Jeremiah could have been spoken to every child: "I know the plans I have for you . . . to give you a future and a hope." Those also apply to each one of us here today, and even those who are to be born.

God "knows" every child from conception and has given every child a soul. As David once confessed, "For you, O Lord, are my hope. . . . Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb" (Ps 71:5–6).

By giving each child a soul at conception, God has created an individual person with a special destiny—a plan divinely "appointed" from eternity. And because every unborn child has a divine destiny assigned by the Creator, every unborn child has divine dignity and infinite worth.

Therefore, no life can ever be considered an accident or a mistake. Even when a child is conceived in a manner not as God desires, God still has a plan for the child. Any attack on the developing child is simply genocide and murder, a human life sacrificed for the sake of convenience. Worst of all, it is refusal to let God fulfill his intentions for every child he creates. Any nation that permits such injustice and evil to continue—and even consider it a good and positive thing—has certainly earned God's judgment.

Eventually, Jeremiah was obedient to God's plan and completed his calling by bringing a message of doom to his people. Yet, his work would still and ultimately be of a "future and hope" as God promised when he said: "to give you a future and a hope," and that "future and hope" was going to be fulfilled by the prophet whom Jeremiah ultimately represented: Jesus. Once, when Jesus asked what others thought about his identity, the apostles said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Mt 16:14).

When the Virgin Mary was pregnant with Jesus, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John, and something wonderful transpired. As the two mothers greeted each other, John, the unborn but very much alive prophet, leaped for joy in his mother's womb. John, filled with the Holy Spirit before birth, had recognized the presence of Jesus, the yet unborn but very much alive Savior. And both were destined to fulfill their own roles in God's eternal plan of salvation.

John would grow up to prepare the way for the coming Savior, and Jesus would grow up to be the Savior and rescue his people from their sins. For Jesus was called by the Father from eternity and sent to our world to suffer and die for every sinner at the hands of wicked men. Then, in the power of his resurrection, Jesus rescued every sinner from death and judgment, so that every forgiven sinner might serve him according to God's divine plan and will.

So, why would “Christians get so worked up about abortion?” Well “Imagine that every aborted fetus is not just a glob of cells, but is actually a human life, designed by God, and given eternal value and worth, with its own personal destiny set by God himself. About one and one half million of such unborn children are murdered in our nation each year, one every thirty seconds.” Now, if we believed what we believe, if we take God’s word seriously, wouldn’t that bother us, and not only Christians but any human being that appreciates life?

Yet the many are believing the wicked propaganda that the unborn are not real human beings, just fetuses, to be aborted or used in science experiments, that an abortion is just a health-care issue, a woman’s right, not murder.

But today, having heard the Word of God for yourselves concerning the unborn Jeremiah, how God had plans for Him since even before he was conceived, may the truth about God’s eternal plan for every unborn child move you to protect the precious lives of God’s littlest lambs, so that they can fulfill their destinies according to God’s plan.

And, if you yourself have ever been a party to abortion, know that God has fulfilled his plan to prosper—to forgive—you by his Son’s cross.

Now having heard how Jeremiah was obedient to God’s calling, to God’s plan for his life, may we too, become obedient and diligently seek what God has for each one of us in His plans, not only for our daily lives, for each one of our futures, and certainly in faithfully live in Christ and all his benefits, especially his plans for future and hope, future of salvation and life eternal. After all our “future and hope” is Christ the eternal gift God has given us. And again, not only for the future but even for today and he will be alongside telling you “don’t be afraid!”

There is the story of Ignace Jan Paderewski, the famous composer-pianist. He was scheduled to perform at a great concert hall somewhere in North America. It was an evening to remember—black tuxedos and long evening dresses, a high-society extravaganza. Present in the audience that evening was a mother with her fidgety nine-year-old son. Weary of waiting, he squirmed constantly in his seat. His mother was in hopes that her son would be encouraged to practice the piano if he could just hear the immortal Paderewski at the keyboard. So—against his wishes—he had come.

As she turned to talk with friends, her son could stay seated no longer. He slipped away from her side, strangely drawn to the ebony concert grand Steinway and its leather tufted stool on the huge stage flooded with blinding lights. Without much notice from the sophisticated audience, the boy sat down at the stool, staring wide-eyed at the black and white keys. He placed his small, trembling fingers in the right location and began to play “Chopsticks.” The roar of the crowd was hushed as hundreds of frowning faces pointed in his direction. Irritated and embarrassed, they began to shout: “Get that boy away from there!” “Who’d bring a kid that young here?” “Where’s his mother?” “Somebody stop him!” Backstage, the master overheard the sounds out front and quickly put together in his mind what was happening. Hurriedly, he grabbed his coat and rushed toward the stage. Without one word of announcement he stooped over behind the boy, reached around both sides, and began to improvise a counter melody to harmonize with and enhance “Chopsticks.” As the two of them played together,

Paderewski kept whispering in the boy's ear: Keep going. Don't quit. Keep on playing...don't stop...don't quit.

And that is how God would respond. We hammer away on the project, which seems about as significant as "Chopsticks" in a concert hall. And about the time we are ready to give up, along comes the Master who leans over and whispers: Keep going. Don't quit. Keep on playing...don't stop...don't quit. As He improvises on our behalf, providing just the right touch as just the right moment. And when finally when we simply try he will stand in the balcony and applaud louder than anyone else. You see the Lord is a Great and Loving father. His desire is not to punish us or to scorn us, but to show us, to give us "a future and a hope." And when we walk away from him in rebellion he still forgives us our sins for Jesus sake.

In his name Amen.