

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

" Buying in a Bear Market"

Rev. Fred Weimert - September 26, 2010

Every once and a while

I wake up in the middle of the night,
and occasionally,

when I feel certain that I'll not get back to sleep,
I go downstairs
to read or watch television.

The television programming at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning
leaves a great deal to be desired.

most of what you see are infomercials.

I think my favorite ones

are the **property pyramid scam scheme** ones.

Those shysters who come on

touting their training programs,

at which you are going to learn

How to earn 20, 30, 40 thousand dollars
or more per month...

with a minimal outlay
of capital.

What gets me most

is that three years ago,

before the housing market bubble burst

These same scammers

were telling you that

"This is the perfect moment
to get rich

in the real-estate market.

Now they are saying

that since the bubble has burst,

and prices are sliding down.

"This is the perfect moment

to get in and make a killing."

They interviewed this one older woman,

who in three months, we are told,

had invested in three properties

one per month,

and now she is making \$10,000-15,000

per month, per property.
This woman may be outperforming Donald Trump.

I would definitely recommend that you
not get involved in some crazy
property pyramid scam scheme.
If this kind of money were to be made with real-estate
trust me...
the banks wouldn't be auctioning off
all of this property
they have foreclosed on.

Saying that,
I would also say,
that I am not ready to give up on home ownership
or life in general...

I had some Jehovah Witnesses come to my door yesterday,
and while I was able to get rid of them quickly
by telling them that I was a Baptist minister.
It works,
and you can use it,
since we believe in the priesthood of believers.
Seeing the Jehovah's witnesses,
made me think about their joyless theology...
they celebrate almost nothing in life...
They believe that the end is near...
and that we should just give up on the possibility
of a meaningful, or productive life on earth.
That doesn't work for me.

Today's Hebrew Bible reading
is all about the purchase of a piece of property,
but to understand the significance of this purchase...
at that time – is crucial.

The opening words of the passage
set the stage well.
This was the 10th year
of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah...
You need to know
that Zedekiah was a political pawn
who had been placed on the throne
by Nebuchandrezzar,
ruler of Babylon...

After he had become displeased
 with Jehoiachin
 who Nebuchadnezzar had also
 placed on the throne.
 Jehoiachin had lasted three months.

So I guess Zedekiah was doing pretty well lasting 10 years.
 But recently Zedekiah had attempted to extricate himself
 from under the thumb of Babylon,
 and to do that he had made an alliance with Egypt.

So when the Babylonian armies had laid siege to Jerusalem...
 The Egyptian armies had marched toward Judah...
 and Babylon had pulled back, briefly,
 but soon they would return with a vengeance,
 and within a year Jerusalem
 would be sacked and burned.

And this is how II Kings 25: 6-7 describes the fate of Zedekiah:

*Then they captured the king
 and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah,
 who passed sentence on him.
 They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes,
 then put out the eyes of Zedekiah;
 they bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon.*

You can actually read more about this period of history
 and this actual event in Jeremiah 37 and following...
 But know that at the time of this land purchase
 the nation of Judah was about to be destroyed,
 as Jeremiah had said it would be.

Jeremiah 32: 1-3a, 6-15

*The word that came to Jeremiah
 from the LORD
 in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah,
 which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.
 At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem,
 and the prophet Jeremiah
 was confined in the court of the guard
 that was in the palace of the king of Judah,
 where King Zedekiah of Judah had confined him.
 Because Jeremiah had been preaching treason...
 surrender to Babylon.*

Zedekiah had said,

"Why do you prophesy and say:

The word of the LORD came to me:

*Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say,
"Buy my field that is at Anathoth,
for the right of redemption by purchase is yours."*

*Then my cousin Hanamel came to me
in the court of the guard,
in accordance with the word of the LORD,
and said to me,*

*"Buy my field that is at Anathoth
in the land of Benjamin,
for the right of possession and redemption is yours;
buy it for yourself."*

Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

*And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel,
and weighed out the money to him,
seventeen shekels of silver.*

*I signed the deed,
sealed it,
got witnesses,
and weighed the money on scales.*

*Then I took the sealed deed of purchase,
containing the terms and conditions,
and the open copy;
and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch
son of Neriah son of Mahseiah,
in the presence of my cousin Hanamel,
in the presence of the witnesses
who signed the deed of purchase,
and in the presence of all the Judeans
who were sitting in the court of the guard.*

*In their presence I charged Baruch, saying,
Thus says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel:*

*Take these deeds,
both this sealed deed of purchase
and this open deed,
and put them in an earthenware jar,
in order that they may last for a long time.*

*For thus says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel:*

*Houses and fields and vineyards
shall again be bought in this land.*

Here ends the reading.

The city of Jerusalem was under siege
and Jeremiah was in prison...

possibly hanging in a cistern.
His guards had run out of food to feed themselves and him.

This was a rather bleak moment,
and it would hardly seem to be the moment
to get involved with a property purchase scheme.
That would have been even more unlikely that me
suddenly getting the urge to purchase some property
at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning.
I doubt that the preeminent thing in Jeremiah's mind
was procuring property in Israel...
He most likely was looking
at spending the remainder of his life
in Babylon
or Egypt...
or maybe he would die
in the cistern of the guard house.

But God had apparently spoken to him
in relationship to what was about to happen.
How the message came
We don't really know.
Was it a dream?
a premonition?
did he hear voices.
Or knowing his uncle *Shallum's* age
did he just have a feeling
that he would soon
be called on
to redeem
the family's
land.

All of this land redeeming was required by Levitical law
*"If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty
and sells a piece of property,
then the next of kin shall come
and redeem what the relative has sold.*
(Leviticus 25: 25)

This is what Boaz had done for Naomi and Ruth
in the book of Ruth.

So in this story, when his *cousin Hanamel*,
shows up at the court of the guard,
Jeremiah appears to know exactly what needs to be done...
now that uncle *Shallum* had died.
This was confirmation of the message received from God.

And Jeremiah sets out in such an orderly fashion
 to take care of Gods will.
 Weighing out the silver
 to buy the land.
 Signing the papers
 having them witnessed
 by everyone in the court of the guard...

And finally,
 in front of everyone who has witnessed
 this whole proceeding
 Jeremiah tells his trusted secretary Baruch
 to take these precious papers,
 his family's claim to property and to the land,
 place it in a sealed earthenware jar,
 where it will remain safe for a long time...
 Maybe hide it like they had
 hidden the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Then Jeremiah,
 who had spoken so often of the coming destruction
 spoke these closing words:

*For thus says the LORD of hosts,
 the God of Israel:
 Houses and fields and vineyards
 shall again be bought in this land.*

And in verse 17 of chapter 32
 Jeremiah begins speaks a beautiful prayer
 that opens with the words:

*Ah Lord God!
 It is you who made the heavens and the earth
 by your great power and by our outstretched arm!
 Nothing is too hard for you.*

These are difficult days,
 trying times,
 difficult economic times,
 and I can't tell you how they will turn out.
 but I do trust in that same God
 that Jeremiah trusted in...
 *"Who made heaven and earth,
 for whom nothing is too hard..."*

Our belief is in that God,
 and therefore we continue to live,
 buying and selling land...
 Not simply for economic gain,
 but as a symbol of our trust

in God's continuing providence...
in the God who watches over us...
seeing all our actions...
and caring ultimately
that there would continue to be
a people who live on earth...
faithfully,
no matter what.
So may we live.
Amen.