



Jeremiah 29:4-11 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; ⁵Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; ⁶Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. ⁷And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. ⁸For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. ⁹For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD. ¹⁰For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. ¹¹For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Matthew 25: 34-45 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ³⁸When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? ³⁹Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. ⁴¹Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴²For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: ⁴³I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. ⁴⁴Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? ⁴⁵Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

REV. WILLIAM J. WYNE

SECOND MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN

SERMON PREACHED: JANUARY 15, 2012

AT

**MLK Sunday
First Presbyterian Church
Battle Creek, Michigan**

I am very grateful today to be the preacher here at First Presbyterian. I have been at First Congregational for the past seven (7) years and the Pastor of First Congregational preached for me. However, the A.M.E. preacher said to the Presbyterian Pastor that the Baptist Pastor would not be going to the Congregational Church this year. The Presbyterian will be at the Baptist and vice versa, and A.M.E. Pastor would be at the Congregational Church and vice versa (so here I am). I did not know clergy could be so jealous!!

During World War I the city of Strasbourg (a city in France on the German borders) was bombed; it destroyed that old city and one of the great Cathedrals of that city. Very little remained and the people gathered to save and salvage what they could. As the people began to retrieve what was usable and what would become a part of their keepsakes as memories of the old worship house, they noticed that the old statue that was in front of the church was down, but in many ways still in tact. A group of men found a way to raise that granite stone sculpture of Christ, and they noticed that the hands and the feet were destroyed in the blast. They resolved to rebuild that wonderful old house of faith and their city as well. A well known sculptor heard that the famous statue was damaged and heard that it had been raised, so he came to see if he might be able to restore it. Upon investigation, he said to the church that the statue could be restored quite easily, since the only thing gone were the hands and feet of Christ. He even volunteered to do that work at his own cost as a donation and a lover of the grand old house that had stood as a place of faith and hope to the people. He had them to load it up and carry to his warehouse where he worked, and said when the church was rebuilt he would have that statue ready to be replaced in the front. As the church began to rebuild, someone had an idea that became a great testimony of faith and a global message to all people of faith. Someone said, "Let's not have the statue restored", let's have the statue cleaned up, polished up, and the nicks and scratches refinished, but let's leave the hands of Christ off and the statue mounted with the feet of Christ not there. And as a reminder to us and all others who will ever see or hear of this story, let's engrave on the base: "Christ has no hands but ours, and Christ has no feet but ours". May this monument be an encouragement to be authentic in our evangelism and cognizant of our role and responsibility as people of faith.

The Hymnist/Poet picks that theme up and wrote: *Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today. He has no feet but our feet to lead men in the way. He has no tongue but our tongue to tell men how he died. He has no help but our help to bring them to his side.*

This seems to be the theological thread that weaves its way through the writings of Jeremiah and Matthew in the texts today. Jeremiah's word is a word that is spoken to the people as a promise that God has a plan and a purpose for them. It's a plan and a purpose that His promises will ultimately be realized by them,

but they had a part in those promises. These promises were not spiritual panaceas, in other words, God was not going to do everything for Israel. Dr. King reminded us of that, he said, "Faith in God does not mean that God will do everything for man, that is not faith, that is superstition". Faith in God trusts the promises and provision of the divine, but faith in God needs to be harnessed with the hands and feet of humans engaged in being and doing their part to walk in the promises. A faith that puts all the effort and energy upon God does the faithful little good in spiritual development and personal responsibility.

That is what we hear in the Gospel of Matthew, out of Christ own lips, as He is raising the standards of expectations and promising the rewards for those who follow those standards:

Matthew 25: 34-45 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ³⁸When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? ³⁹Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. ⁴¹Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴²For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: ⁴³I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. ⁴⁴Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? ⁴⁵Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

He actually is saying that we have the power and potential of making life better. The well being of this world, the peace that can exist in this world, the harmony that needs to be in this world is in our hands. If we look for the answers solely to come from Lansing or Washington D. C., we are going to be looking a long time. They may be a part of the solution; the real answers come from us.

It's in our hands to:

I. Demonstrate what it really means to Care about Others.

Too often we spend too much time in discussions and deliberations, when what the world and community needs to see is a bold demonstration of people joining hands and hearts to make it better. I like the analogy of Dr. King when he used this text to challenge us on our responsibilities: "I was hungry, and you formed a humanities group to discuss my hunger, I was imprisoned, and you crept off quietly to your chapel and prayed for my release. I was naked, and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance. I was sick, and you knelt and thanked God for your health. I was homeless, and you spoke to me of the spiritual shelter of God's love. I was lonely, and you left me alone to pray for me. You seem so holy, so close to God. But I am still very hungry and lonely and cold."

God has no hands but ours, no feet but ours, no voice but ours.

Because the real test of our faith and concern for others is when we can rise above the narrow confines of individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity. We must rise above parties and politics, community lines and neighborhoods, conservatives and liberals, northside and southside, geography and economics.

It appears to me too often that those who walk in the darkness are more zealous than those who profess to walk in the light.

Sometimes it seems that those who say that they walk in the light seem to be guided by a different moral compass of something other than our manual of faith.

The truth of the matter is it's not enough to give charity. It is our duty to do our share to see to it that we build a society where charity will not be unnecessary, a society where no sick person will go unattended, no hungry person will go unfed, no one is poorly housed, no able-bodied person will go without adequate employment, and good schools will be provided for all.

It's in our hands to:

II. Disciple others to work to Make this World Better.

This world is waiting to see a move by people of faith that actually affirms the transforming power of persons believing the tenants and precepts of love one another, do good toward one another, be kind and fair.

We are commissioned and challenged with a great responsibility; we can become drum majors for justice, drum majors for peace, drum majors for equity, drum majors for fairness. It's an indictment on all of us and our faith when good people of the light are silent in the face of injustice, oppression, etc.

I think that it must be remembered that Jesus got into trouble not so much because of His belief in God, as because of His belief in man. Jesus could have gone through the Palestinian world talking about God in the abstract, and He would hardly have gotten into trouble. But when He combined His belief in God with His belief in man, and His love of God with His love of man, His troubles began. We have been charged with a great responsibility. But we must not let what happened to the group of Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody happen to us.

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody were members of a group.

There was an important job to do and **Everybody** was asked to do it.

Everybody was sure that **Somebody** would do it.

Anybody would have done it, but **Nobody** did it.

Somebody got angry because it was **Everybody's** job;

Everybody thought **Anybody** would do it,

but **Nobody** realized that **Anybody** wouldn't do it.

It ended up that **Everybody**, blamed **Somebody**,

when **Nobody** did what **Anybody** could have done.

It's In Our Hands To Make It Better!!! Amen!

Everybody should do it, **Anybody** can do it,

Nobody should be exempt, so **Somebody** please do it!

Will you be that **Somebody**!!!!! Amen!!