

Anniversary celebration of 70 years of Church and Peace
in Berlin on 18 May 2019

'I will give you future and hope' (Jeremiah 29:11)
70 years of living nonviolence - resisting militarisation

Sermon in the Worship Service

(by Mihael Sečen, Intero Centere Rijeka, Croatia)

My name is Mihael Sečen. I'm coming from Croatia and work for Intero centere – association for education, counselling and nonviolent action. I'm here with my friend and colleague Neda Popović and we are both members of C&P.

When Antje asked me to share a few thoughts on the text from Jeremiah, I thought: „great, does Antje know me more than I thought? She asked me to say something on the words of the „weeping prophet“. How did she know that I can connect to him so well? Those of you who know me, know what I'm talking about.

Anyway, I read the words and saw that it doesn't talk about hardship, sadness or doom. It talks about peace, hope and future.

Jeremiah is also sometimes referred to as the „prophet of doom.“ Looking at what is happening around us in politics, climate change, wars and 68.5 million forcibly displaced people around the world, it is easy to talk about doom. I can imagine that Jeremiah felt that way while he was looking at evil of his time while trying to give a different message to his people. In the midst of all of this God speaks of peace, hope and future.

It makes me ask myself the question: “What is keeping me from living and spreading God's promise of peace, hope and future?”

One major feeling I struggle so often with, like Jeremiah did, is fear. And out of fear so often come only words of doom which spread even more fear.

A neuroscientist from the University College London, Tali Sharot and her team did a research on what fear does to people. One of the conclusions of their research was that: “fear is a powerful motivator for inaction.” What calls to action is positive feedback. It's about recognizing the hope, recognizing the efforts we make towards peace and the contribution we make towards a better future. So the question I need to ask myself is: “What fear is stopping me today?” And don't get me wrong, fear is not always something irrational. It can be real fear because of real threatening situations. The challenge is to recognize this fear and to make a conscious decision about what I want to do.

Another fact that is so often keeping me from action is the self-image of scarcity. This too we can assume Jeremiah struggling with, as he said: “...I cannot speak, for I am a child...” (Jeremiah, 1:6) I'm not enough, I can't do enough, I don't know enough. I so often go down the spiral of comparing my efforts to the efforts of others. Comparing myself to my friends, colleagues and team mates whom I admire and, in many things, find inspiration but then also so often self-judgment. The result is loss of peace, fading of hope and a blurred vision of the future. I can no longer see myself as part of a larger image. Especially if I don't see immediate change, I get so easily discouraged and judgmental towards my action.

So, what do these words mean for me today. It means to challenge myself when I'm afraid to take an extra step and accept a challenge even though I might not feel enough. And maybe I'll never be like someone I look up to, but I did the best I could at a given moment to be Mihael Sečen. This is the best and only way to live and spread God's peace, hope and future.