SHALOM FOR EUROPE

Dr. Jan Hoek 30.10.2026

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The Message of Jeremiah 29

594 BC A moving letter of the Lord to Jewish exiles in Babylon.

Vs. 5 -7 core of the message: prepare for a long stay in exile.

After 70 years a new future will dawn in God's time.

God's letter makes it clear that it is possible to serve Him in a pagan environment.

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Status and calling of Christians in the world

- Believers in Christ are *strangers* and *sojourners* in this world, but they are also *priests*. (1 Peter 1:1;1:17; 2:11; 2:9)

- Christians are citizens of two worlds, our homeland (the earth) is occupied teritory.

- The more we carry ‘Jerusalem’ in our hearts, the more we can be of significance for ‘Babel’.

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Four perspectives upon the world

- 1. The perspective of *creation*
- 2. The perspective of *sin*
- 3. The perspective of *reconciliation*
- 4. The perspective of *consummation*

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The world from the perspective of creation

- In the world as created by God we are called to work to His glory with the talents given to us.
- The world is the *statio* for our *vocatio*. (J. Calvin)
- A sanctified life does not unfold in seclusion, but within a framework of creational ordinances (or mandates).
- There are many moments we can feel at home in this world.

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The world from the perspective of sin

- Creation is broken and groans as if in labour. (Rom.8)
- The devil is the prince of this world. (John 12:31)
- The awareness of being a stranger in a sinful world leads to a unique lifestyle.
- Not following the majority in evil, daring to be a Daniël.

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The world from the perspective of reconciliation

- Because of the crucified Lord the world must not be dismissed.
- The church's mission is to live out the Gospel in word and deed.
- A comprehensive approach in the name of God who saves body and soul.

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The world from the perspective of consummation

- Christian service in this world has an eschatological aspect.
- Standing up for justice, committing to just structures and salutary order.
- Social criticism in the interest of humane relations within the public system and also environmental responsibility.

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Participatory pilgrimage

- A faithful realistic view of the present.
- Christians have to resist to the temptation of ‘spiritual pacifism’.
- Militancy is needed in the form of an assertive and creative respons to the banishment of faith from the public domain.
- Ethics of vigilance is needed.

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Relevance of the rich Christian heritage

- In their recently published book *De ongelooflijk geschiedenis. Hoe het christendom onze cultuur vormde (The Incredible History. How Christianity Changed our Culture)* David Boogerd, Beatrice de Graaf & Stefan Paas examine the historical and cultural developments in the Western world over thousands of years.

- Christian values and norms have left a strong mark on European and American culture

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Six Theses

- 1. There are universal human rights
- 2. No one, not even the king, is above the law
- 3. Sex without consent is wrong
- 4. Slavery is wrong
- 5. Richer people have a responsibility towards poorer people
- 6. Peace is better than war

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Six keywords

- 1. Power
- 2. Equality
- 3. Sex
- 4. Nature
- 5. Money
- 6. War

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Power

- In the Judeo - Christian tradition power is always subject to a moral appeal.
- Jesus set the great example. He did not come to rule, but to serve.

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Equality

- Equality is fundamentally a *religious* concept. The basis of equality lies in the fact that we are alle equal before God as created in his image and as fallen sinners.

- God’s incarnation affirms human dignity and urges us to recognize that dignity in everyone.

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Sex

- It is precisely the high value placed on sexuality in Christianity that calles into question any form of commodification of sex.

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Nature

- Throughout most of our Christian history, it has been emphasized that nature has an intrinsic meaning and that sinning against creation is sinning against the Creator himself.

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Money

- Wherever Christianity gains a foothold, care for the poor soon follows.

- Among the Christians the poor were given a face and a name for the first time.

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War

- It is Christian to strive with all one's might for peace and to beat swords into ploughshares.

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Not an unrealistic and one - sidedly rose picture

- The legacy of Christianity has its dark sides too.
- Christianity is not only the cross, but also the Crusades, not only the Sermon on the mount, but also burning people at the stake.
- We must do justice to history in all its complexity.

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A thought- provoking Swiss voice

- Should one not know the *history* of one's own country?
- Shouldn't one appreciate the *origins* of one's own culture?
- Shouldn't one love the *sources* from which the values of justice and mercy have emerged?
- To deliberately destroy one's own birth certificate and deny one's own roots is *hubris* an a form of *cultural dementia*.

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O God, our Help in ages past

- Christian schools have – side by side with families and churches – a significant role in fostering and reinvigorating a Christian historical awareness, looking up to God, our Help in ages past, our hope for years to come.

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