



# Surprising Investment

September 26, 2010

**Focus Scripture**  
**Jeremiah 32:1–3a, 6–15**

Additional Scriptures  
Psalm 91:1–6, 14–16  
1 Timothy 6:6–19  
Luke 16:19–31

**O God, help us to trust in you. May we learn to let go of the things that give us illusions of security, and embrace the goodness of your truth and love. Amen.**

Check out Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage. Spirit Sighting are posted weekly prior to the date of use.

In the midst of seeming hopelessness, God provides surprising and radical gestures of hope. Though it may be difficult to understand, God’s trustworthiness is sure, God’s plans are hopeful, and God’s faithfulness is comforting. In our faith rituals, we celebrate our relationship with God, even in times of chaos and stress.

## Focus Scripture: Jeremiah 32:1–3a, 6–15

In the shadows of the declining Assyrian empire, Babylon and Egypt were flexing their muscles in the region. Jeremiah had begun to warn the people of impending doom at the hands of the ever-expanding Babylonian Empire. True to Jeremiah’s words, the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem in 597 BCE and deported many of its citizens. Furthermore, against the advice of Jeremiah, those remaining in Judah launched an unsuccessful revolt, and the Babylonian army returned in 588 BCE to blockade Jerusalem and starve out the city.

Jeremiah agonized over the theological meaning behind such doom for the people of Judah. The reason for the fall of Jerusalem was not that the Babylonian god was stronger than Yahweh; rather, destruction came because God’s people were worshipping the gods of Baal (fertility and prosperity god of the Canaanites) instead of Yahweh, making an alliance with Egypt, and not trusting in God.

While the Babylonian army was blockading the city, God told Jeremiah to buy a plot of land. Previously God had told Jeremiah to buy a loincloth to hide (13:1–11) and an earthenware jug to break (19:1–11). Now God tells Jeremiah to buy a field that he will not be able to plant or harvest.

The whole episode of Jeremiah buying the field from his cousin is based on “the law of redemption” (Leviticus 25:25–55). This law states that, should any property or any person within the family be in danger of being lost, it is the duty of the most senior family member to make sure it stays within the family. Because of the Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah’s cousin, Hanamel is destitute because he is unable to farm his field at Anathoth – Jeremiah’s ancestral land. Hanamel visits Jeremiah in prison and calls forth the law of redemption.

Jeremiah conducts the transfer of ownership in a conspicuous way. The prophet then orders his trusted companion Baruch to store the document in a safe place – in an earthenware jar that will keep for a long time.

Jeremiah’s act seems incomplete and meaningless without God’s words in verse 15: “Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.” In fact, the whole passage seems meaningless without God’s word to Jeremiah. “Thus says the Lord” appears five times in this short passage to indicate that this transaction is indeed God’s plan; it is a sign of hope of God’s promise of a future beyond the fall of Jerusalem.

Trusting in God’s promises and following God’s ways sometimes require great trust. When **Psalm 91:1–6, 14–16** is placed next to the focus passage, the psalmist’s faith seems even more remarkable: God is faithful, answers our call, and is our refuge and protection. **First Timothy 6:6–9** makes a plea regarding the importance of keeping steadfast faith and the value of holding on to what really is life, rather than material wealth. **Luke 16:19–31** stresses that it is important to serve the neighbour with justice, hospitality, and compassion now – to wait may be too late.



God’s ways are trustworthy even in times of despair and hopelessness; these ways can be trusted even when they seem mysterious to us. What is holding you back – as an individual and as a church – from embracing God’s exciting plans? What makes it possible to dare to trust in God’s plans, even when they seem illogical? What are you and your church willing to sacrifice so that you might make a surprising investment in God’s eternal ways?

