

None of these moves were easy - no help in packing or unpacking, no moving truck – and they had to make do with ox carts, camels and donkeys. Life was often reduced to what one could carry on one's back. But despite the difficult relocation, God the Mover, provided the people of God with a package that rivals anything you might find on a Relo package today, because God is in the relocation business. And *these benefits apply to you whether your "move" is an actual physical relocation, or an emotional, relational or spiritual move.*

God the Mover takes care of our stuff. Just like many movers, God the Mover may lose some of our stuff along the way. But, God is the Mover knows that some baggage should be left behind. Maybe with God's help we can lose the "baggage" of resentment, confusion, impatience, intolerance, guilt or bitterness. God the Mover will take care of the stuff we should keep: kindness, compassion, humility and meekness (Col. 3).

God the Mover takes care of the expenses - it's all free. We're talking about the grace of God, God's unmerited favor. Paul writes to the Corinthian church: *For it is by the grace of God that I am what I am* (1 Cor. 15:10). And he writes to the Ephesians: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God* (2:8). For the Israelites, God even provided free food along the journey (manna and quail).

God the Mover offers 24/7 customer support and personal access if you have questions. God the Mover has some great apps: prayer and the Bible. No voice recognition software is necessary. No menu of options to wade through.

- **God invites us to call:** *Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known* (Jeremiah 33:3).
- **God knows the voice of his clients:** *I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1); "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out* (John 10:3).
- **God is always "in":** *[God] will not let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber; He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep* (Psalm 121:4).

God the Mover offers certain guarantees. *Of all the promises of God, perhaps the most important is peace. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 4:7). *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid* (John 14:27).

God the Mover offers to accompany you on the journey. The biggest example of this is when Moses led the Hebrew people out of Egypt. God went with them, God's presence indicated by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. God makes the move with God's people. It's just how God rolls. It's SOP. God asks us to go, God goes with us. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you, for I am the LORD your God* (Isa. 43:3). *And remember, I am with you always, until the end of the age* (Matt. 28:20).

Another example is the **Exile** . God's presence was good news to the exiles to whom the prophet Jeremiah wrote. They had been moved involuntarily to new homes in enemy territory, but now God promised to relocate them back home to the land from which they came. God's message through the prophet was hopeful: *Wherever you've gone, I will bring you back.*

We know that many of these exiles did return after 70 years in Babylon. When the Persians defeated the Babylonians, they allowed the Jews to return home. But there was a sense that they weren't really at home when they got there. They were still living under foreign occupation - a condition that lasted through the New Testament period and beyond. It must have felt like moving from once being a prosperous homeowner, to now being a renter of your former house. Things had changed.

Moving back to God. But God hadn't changed. God promised to "save the remnant" and gather the people of God into a new sort of home (v. 7). They would return to their occupied land, but *God seemed to be even more concerned with returning them to a faithful state of mind. The physical address was not as important as their relocation in a spiritual relationship with God.*

Whether we're thinking about moving ahead and making some changes in the new year, or thinking about changing addresses, Jeremiah tells us that *the first move we should make is back to God's promises of grace, redemption and joy.* In today's culture, Christianity is becoming more and more of a "remnant." So our best move is to recognize our dependence on God for redemption from the "hands" of sin that are too strong for us to break on our own (v. 11). We recognize that we have been blind to God's vision for our lives. We acknowledge our own lame attempts to do things our way. We realize that we need new birth and the guiding hand of the Shepherd.

If we want to be better people in the coming year, we must begin by *relocating ourselves closer to God* in repentance, worship and confession. It's this humility and faithfulness that will enable the church to occupy prime real estate once again. As God promised through Jeremiah, the "nations" and the "coastlands" will see God's redemptive power revealed, because they are humble children of God who walk in God's straight path (v. 9).

As we gather at Christ's table today, at the start of this new year, we are invited to "relocate" ourselves – to move our hearts and minds – toward repentance, humility and faithfulness to God. In this way we show ourselves to be followers of Jesus who always looked to God and who in all humility and faithfulness took on human form, to die and rise again, so that we might be saved from sin and freed for new life. Whatever our physical address, we are properly relocated when we allow God to be the one who moves us.

Sources:

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God Is in the Relocation Business

Sunday, January 3, 2016

The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Jeremiah 31:7-14

It's the first Sunday of 2016 - already! It's a new year full of new opportunities. Maybe this will be the year you make a move. Like, pack up and get out of town. It's no secret that Americans are hustling. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 16.9 million Americans changed their addresses in 2012 as the recession eased, with 7 million of those moves taking place from one state to another, which was up 5% from 2010. The average American will move 11.3 times in his or her lifetime, which means that searching for boxes at the local grocery store could be classified as a new American pastime.

A lot of this moving around is due to work. This means that a company that moves an employee often offers some relocation benefits to make the transition easier. Relo packages they're called and the benefits often include: packing and moving of household goods, helping you buy or sell a house, paying for house hunting trips, providing temporary housing, paying for storage, and moving the family car. A good relocation package can make all the difference if you're transitioning to a new place.

God is the "Mover." Of course, this constant changing of addresses shouldn't be new to those of us who read the Bible on a regular basis. In many ways, we're simply following the lead of our biblical ancestors who also moved a lot for work or to find better grazing. But whatever the *apparent* reason, God was the Mover. Recall Joseph's statement to his brothers: *So it was not you who sent me here, but God* (Gen. 45:8). Abraham moved from Mesopotamia to Canaan on God's promise of a family and a home. Jacob moved to Egypt in a time of famine. Moses moved the Hebrews out of Egyptian slavery and back to Canaan. Ruth moved from Moab to Judah. Perhaps the most traumatic move of all: The Jews were taken from their homeland and deported to Babylon to live in exile - which links to our Jeremiah text today. Joseph moved his family (Mary and Jesus) to Egypt for a couple years. The apostle Paul was always on the move.