

Intro

Good morning, City Hope Church!

I don't know about y'all but I still can't get over last Sunday during our Easter Services. My small group spent time this week celebrating and praising God after hearing about one of our people who filled out a who's your one card, prayed over that card, invited their friend and then their friend responded to the gospel invitation this past week.

If this week is your first week with us or you are returning from a first time visit last week. Welcome, we are so glad you are here.

Today we are going to be taking a look at Jeremiah 29. If you have your bibles and I hope you do, will you turn with me there.

As you're turning, I have to ask, do you have a favorite verse? Or a verse that means a lot to you?

How many of you have signs from Hobby Lobby with verses on them?

How many of you have clothing with an important verse to you?

How many of you have jewelry? Or dare I say a tattoo?

I've got two verses that stand out to me the most

1. I had engraved on the inside of my Citadel class ring
2. The other is symbolized by a tattoo at the base of my bicep

When I graduated high school, every gift I got had the verse Jeremiah 29:11 on it. I think most of y'all would be familiar with it even if you don't know the reference. And if you don't, no worries.

Jeremiah 29:11 reads, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans for a hope and a future."

A very comforting verse, honestly at 18 years old I thought that all the adults were telling me to do was go meet a nice church boy, get good grades, marry a nice church girl and God will hand you the american dream no problem.

I'd like to take a look at that verse today along with 10 other verses around it to find the hope and future God is talking about.

I'd like to give you a map to show you where we're going.

1. Purpose
2. Instruction

3. Warning
4. Hope

Now let's stand and read together Jeremiah 29:4-14

READ SCRIPTURE

This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles I deported from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 “Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Find wives for yourselves, and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters to men in marriage so that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there; do not decrease. 7 Pursue the well-being^[a] of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the LORD on its behalf, for when it thrives, you will thrive.”

8 For this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: “Don’t let your prophets who are among you and your diviners deceive you, and don’t listen to the dreams you elicit from them, 9 for they are prophesying falsely to you in my name. I have not sent them.” This is the LORD’s declaration.

10 For this is what the LORD says: “When seventy years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. 12 You will call to me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“and I will restore your fortunes^[b] and gather you from all the nations and places where I banished you”—this is the LORD’s declaration. “I will restore you to the place from which I deported you.”

Jeremiah 29:4-14

Purpose

This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles I deported from Jerusalem to Babylon:

- Salutation of a Letter
 - The Bible is written for us, NOT to us
 - Jeremiah's letter from God isn't even to every Jewish person written at that time but specifically to the those Jewish people living in exile in Babylon
 - Although this letter is written to a specific group of people, in a specific place, at a specific time I do believe that we can learn about God, ourselves, and the commands God wants us to follow
- God is in Control
 - The second, important piece thing we see is God taking ownership
 - God says, "It's not an accident what happened to you"
 - God tells the Israelites, they didn't catch me off guard
 - They didn't surprise me
 - I didn't drift off to sleep for a second and then awake to find you God
 - No, no God says I have sent you here
 - God says this is where I want you and you are here for a purpose
 - So now, here are my instructions

Instruction

5 "Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Find wives for yourselves, and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters to men in marriage so that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there; do not decrease. 7 Pursue the well-being^[a] of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the LORD on its behalf, for when it thrives, you will thrive."

2 important instructions

- 1. get comfy and set roots
 - Check the emphasis
 - Build houses -> live in them
 - Plant gardens -> eat from them
 - Have children -> marry off your children
 - Difference between renting and owning
 - When you rent especially when you are young it's temporary
 - When Erica and I were first married we had thrift store furniture and nothing was mounted to the wall
 - We used thumbtacks to hang a few picture frames
 - We had hutches and bookcases instead of shelves
 - Our tv sat on a tv stand

- Why? We were poor and didn't have much and we needed that security deposit back
- But usually the idea of renting is that it's temporary
- The Exiles thought because of false prophets that they would be there for 2 years but the truth for most of those reading this letter they would be dead before the end of the exile
- 2. Be a blessing in enemy territory
 - Pursue the wellbeing of the city
 - Some of your translations will read seek the PEACE of the city
 - Pray on its behalf
 - And being very practical of God even if you do this for selfish reasons because when it succeeds you will succeed
 - This had to be incredibly hard to hear as an israelite exiled in babylon
 - This was a group of people who destroyed your capital city
 - Forced you to move to another place
 - Taken your kids and put them to work in the king's service
 - Now you live amongst these people and they don't believe what you believe
 - These people are your enemies and God is asking you to pray for them
 - Invest in their economy
 - And hope they do well so that you might do well
- Ultimately God's instruction is to get plugged into this new and different community, to love this community, and to invest in its future.
- Next is a word of warning

Warning

8 For this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: "Don't let **YOUR** prophets who are among you and your diviners deceive you, and don't listen to the dreams you elicit from them, 9 for they are prophesying falsely to you in my name. I have not sent them." This is the LORD's declaration.

- For me, the most important word of this section is the word **YOUR** found in verse 8
- The false prophets told the people that their stay would be short and Jeremiah needed to assert that this was falsehood propagated in the name of Yahweh who had not sent them.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ J. A. Thompson, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Jeremiah*. (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1980) 547

- - In Chapter 28, Jeremiah goes head to head with Hananiah who was prophesying ‘in the name of the Lord’ falsely that the exile would not be seventy years but it was going to be two years long (verse 11).
- It would make sense for God to say don’t listen to the prophets of other religions you will meet in this polytheistic, universalist culture I have put you in
- But the reality of this warning, is God saying don’t listen to the ones who say they are speaking for me when they speak lies
- If I was a Jewish exile at this point I would need a bit of a pick me up so how about some hope

Hope

10 For this is what the LORD says: “When seventy years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place.

11 For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. 12 You will call to me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“and I will restore your fortunes^[b] and gather you from all the nations and places where I banished you”—this is the LORD’s declaration. “I will restore you to the place from which I deported you.”

- This part of the passage is a powerful promise of hope in the future of prosperity and security.
- The Israelites are in exile because they rejected God and even still
- God is working for the good of the people even if it doesn’t feel good sometimes
- Think about it, It was a terrible for the Jewish people to be defeated and be relocated to Babylon but God had something bigger in mind for them and for his purposes
- I think it was in part to use them as an illustration for what He was doing in history
- God is promising a future salvation in which he will return to them, be with them, and take them home.
- That’s the Hope, and if we zoom out from this passage to look at the whole Bible we know what that Hope really is because we know the end of the story

Jesus is the Hope for the Future

- He is Emmanuel, God with us
- Their only hope and our only hope for a future is found in the man and work of Jesus Christ on the cross and his victory over the grave

- And for those who are in Christ we have embraced that hope
- When we accept Jesus Christ and make him Lord over our lives our identity changes, which includes our citizenship
 - We are no longer JUST Americans, we are now citizens of heaven
 - We are outside of our home country waiting for Jesus to take us home into eternity

Here's how we relate with the exiles from this specific time

- Our time here on the earth is temporary.
 - Only for a season, scripture says we are here today and gone tomorrow whoosh
- And the truth is This is not our home
 - We are exiles living in a foreign country
 - We are waiting for Jesus to call us home to be with him
 - The New Testament calls it what it is we are
 - strangers
 - exiles
 - Aliens
- Instruction
- Our call as Christians is to live intentionally on mission for God
- God is not surprised by where you work, live, or go to school
 - In fact, I believe that he wants us to live on mission for Him in those places
 - In Matthew 28, Jesus tells us, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and The Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. For surely, I'll be with you until the very end of the age.
 - Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his disciples, "You will be my witnesses"
- We are called to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us
- In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Matt 5:16

Our Warning Today

- This is a powerful warning for everyone in the room today.
- Be careful who you follow on social media and who you let influence you in the name of Jesus.
- Just because they say they represent Jesus doesn't mean it's true. We need a discerning spirit as we scroll through socials, watch television, read/or listen to audiobooks, and listen to podcasts.
- The only way to know what the lies are to know the truth so well we see the lie coming miles away
- We do this through personal study of God's word, wrestling with scripture in small group, and praying for the Holy Spirit to develop our ability to discern the truth from the lies
- 6vs9 story

The Promise of Hope (Joseph comes up around this point)

- It's really easy to be tempted to lose hope
 - News
 - Petty drama in our lives
 - Sin
 - People personal agendas
 - The enemy, Satan, who prowls like a lion waiting to destroy us
- Every morning we wake up we have to engage in our primary ministry which is to Love the Lord our God with all of our Hearts, Soul, Mind and Strength.
 - It's out of this ministry that we can love the ones around us.
 - It's in that ministry that we strive to keep the main thing, the main thing throughout the day
- We can pray for our city on its behalf
- Then we can go out to invite everyday people to experience the hope we have in Jesus because we know that when we seek God we will find him when we seek him with all of our hearts
 - We can go across the street to our neighbor
 - We can talk to a coworker on our break or invite them to lunch
 - We can love on the other parents and our kids sporting events
- And like so many other testimonies we've already heard from last Sunday we can pray God, Who is that one person you want me to love and share my story with, pray with, and invite them to City Hope Church

City Hope Church

Today, Right now, we all have the opportunity to respond to God's word and his message.

Some of you have never put your HOPE in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Bible says if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and God raised him from the dead you will be saved. To make Jesus Lord of your life is to commit to obeying his commands. If you are ready to intentionally give your life to Jesus, I would like to meet with you after the service or you can talk with one of our other Pastors or Elders.

Maybe your next step is to start living with intentionality. Not sure how to do that:

- We have classes to help you get started
- Prefer on the job training, we want to talk to you about joining a serving team so we can get to know you
- Maybe you just need to get into some biblical community, we can get you connected with a group to talk Bible with
- Y'all we have a prayer team on hand praying for our service right now, they would love to pray for you and believe me they are prayer warriors and God hears their prayers

Maybe when I talked about Who's your one? The holy spirit dropped a name or a picture of a neighbor, coworker, or family member came to mind. Begin praying for them right now and let us know how we can pray with you or how we can equip you to tell them about Jesus.

Church, God has called us to be an Army not an audience. He is not surprised by where we are and he wants to use us in our workplaces, neighborhoods, and schools to bring hope to those who need it. How will you live with intentionality, seeking God first and bringing hope to the City?

Let us pray.