

Bird's Eye View:
Week 3: A Letter From Home

I. Introduction

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Greet the congregation and online viewers.
- Mention the Tab MidWeek Meal and the opportunity to connect on Wednesdays.
- Acknowledge guests and newcomers, encouraging them to join the Tab family.

2. Transition to the Sermon

- Introduce the theme of God's discipline as a manifestation of His love.
 - Explain that today's message will explore how God communicates with His people through discipline and exile, drawing from the book of Jeremiah.
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II. Context of the Passage

1. Historical Background

- Recap the events leading up to Judah's exile: Babylon conquering Judah in 597 B.C.
- Highlight Jeremiah's role as a prophet delivering God's message during this tumultuous time.

2. The Letter from Jeremiah

- Set the stage: Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles in Babylon between 597 B.C. and 587 B.C.
- Theme of the letter: "Finding peace when life is in pieces."

3. Modern-Day Parallel

- Share the story of Salma, a refugee from Sudan, to illustrate the harsh realities of exile.
 - Relate this to the experiences of the exiles in Jeremiah's time.
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III. The Message of the Letter

1. God's Discipline and Love

- Discuss how God's discipline, though difficult, is rooted in His love and aims to turn His people's hearts back to Him.
- Reflect on the example of Daniel, a righteous man who suffered due to the nation's sins.

2. God's Presence in Exile

- Explain that even in exile or difficult circumstances, God's presence brings peace.
 - Distinguish between peace and hope: peace is the result of God's presence in our current situation, while hope is the confident assurance of God's future promises.
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IV. Instructions to the Exiles (Jeremiah 29:1-7)

1. God's Command to Settle Down

- God instructs the exiles to build houses, plant gardens, and establish families in Babylon.
- Emphasize the long-term nature of this command: a call to plant roots and settle for the long haul.

2. Pursuing the Peace of Babylon

- Explore the radical idea that the exiles are to seek the well-being (shalom) of Babylon.
 - Explain that pursuing the peace of their captors leads to their own peace and thriving.
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V. The Promise of God's Plans (Jeremiah 29:8-14)

1. Warning Against False Prophets

- Address the danger of listening to false prophets who promise immediate relief from exile.
- Reiterate that God's plans often involve patience and trust in His timing.

2. God's Plans for Well-Being

- Focus on Jeremiah 29:11, a declaration of God's plans for His people's well-being, not disaster.
- Explain that true prosperity is experiencing God's peace, even when life is in pieces.

3. Call to Seek God Wholeheartedly

- God promises that when His people seek Him with all their hearts, they will find Him.
 - Highlight the importance of seeking God's presence above all else, even in challenging circumstances.
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VI. Application: A Personal Letter from God

1. Reflection on Our Own 'Exiles'

- Encourage the congregation to reflect on areas of their lives where they feel exiled or distant from God.
- Reassure them that God's presence and peace are available, even in these difficult times.

2. God's Invitation

- Present the concept of God writing a personal letter to each person, reassuring them of His plans for their well-being.
 - Read a personalized version of Jeremiah 29:11-14 as a letter from God.
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VII. Conclusion

1. Final Encouragement

- Reiterate that God's discipline and presence are always wrapped in His love.
- Encourage the congregation to embrace God's peace and seek Him wholeheartedly.

2. Closing Prayer

- Lead the congregation in prayer, asking for God's peace and guidance as they navigate their own "exiles."
- Invite them to trust in God's plans and to seek His presence daily.