

God Has a Plan - Tim's notes

(For syllabus and resources for this Jeremiah series type bit.ly/nlncmu into any browser.)

Getting Started:

How much room for improvisation do you allow in your vacation planning?

Practicing God's Presence

Last week: Sensory 2: The Ministry of Music

This week: Prayer 01: Flash Prayers

Pick one situation that recurs through your week. Every time it occurs, flash a 1-sentence prayer that acknowledges God's presence. Jot down one default prayer for those flash moments.

Examples of situations: Upon waking, before eating a snack, before making a phone call, while waiting at a red light, while waiting in a line, or when laying down to sleep.

Examples of 1-sentence prayers: You're a good, good Father and I'm loved by you. Thanks for a seat at your table. Thanks for incorporating my story in your story. Thanks for loving me as if I did all that Jesus did. Thanks for letting me live today in the freedom of Christ. Jesus, be my center. Help me to know and follow hard after Jesus. Help me represent you well today. Let me be singing when the evening comes.

God Has a Plan (Jeremiah 29.1-14)

Let's ask God to speak to us through scripture this morning.

Context:

Jeremiah (& friends) preached that Babylon would soon overrun Jerusalem. Others preached that God would soon deliver Jerusalem as in the days of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-19). **X** marks the time of that miracle:

Jacob (Israel, 12 sons/tribes) -> Exodus (1446 BCE) -> Shiloh fell (1100) -> split (930)...

- Northern Kingdom (Israel) -----> (722) Assyria
- Southern Kingdom (Judah) -----**X**-----> (586) Babylon

DeeDee will share the story of the Hezekiah miracle.

29.1-3:

This link has interesting background on [Jeremiah's connection to Elasah and Shaphan](#).

Who do you think read the letter? – *The subset of Jews deemed useful who were forced to Babylon, including Ezekiel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. Maybe Jehoiachin, Zedekiah and other palace people we were also exiled. Probably more.*

29.4-9:

(v4) Why do you think it says “he has exiled” instead of just “exiled”? – *To make it clear that their exile was the action of the Lord, who was in control, regardless of all evidence to the contrary.*

(v6) What are the implications of v6? – *They were to serve Babylon, but not to forget that they were God’s chosen community. They were a key part of the remnant that God planned to use in to reclaim his city Jerusalem.*

How do you think the exiles felt when they read this passage? – *Disheartened, they preferred to believe that God would rescue them in a few weeks and they’d be back home in Jerusalem.*

Another set of prophets told the people that the Lord would miraculously save them very soon so do not settle down in Babylon. How were the people to know if this was a call to radical faith in God or denial of reality? – *The people heard what they wanted to hear, and ignored the impact of their own sin.*

What do you think life would look like for the exiles to settle in and seek the peace and prosperity of their new city? – *Living as citizens of Judah, God’s kingdom, while sleeping every night as an exile in Babylon.*

29.10-14:

Is the 70 years is literal or figurative? – *From the time of the temple destruction in 586/87 until daily sacrifices resumed in the second temple in 515 is about 50 years. We can understand Jeremiah’s use of 70 figuratively by noting that the number “10” sometimes symbolized completion and the number “7” perfection. Or we can understand it as more of an approximate span meaning a long time, but not infinitely long - essentially telling the readers that few, if any, of them would live until the return. But their many of their children and grandchildren will. So stay steady in Babylon and keep the faith.*

Is the remnant’s return to Jerusalem dependent upon their behavior or upon the action of God? – *Probably both.*

Remember v4 & 6? Do you see similar phrasing in 10-14? – *There are several, but note especially v11: “I have plans for you,” meaning “you” as in a people-group that God wants to remain connected even during captivity. God’s eventual plan is for a people that has come through this exile.*

What was the recurring sin of Israel for centuries before Jeremiah? How did the Babylonian captivity affect this? – *Idol worship. Israel never again fell into idol worship.*

Connecting to life:

What did Jeremiah write in this letter to the exiles that we can use? - 1) *J completely avoids even a hint of, “I told you so.”* 2) *Identified the reality of the exiles’ situation, which must have helped them embrace it.* 3) *Helped them envision a favorable future.* 4) *Build a God-following-community that offers good to the worldly-community in which you live.*

How do you compare Israel’s three major exile stories?

1. 400 years of slavery in Egypt ended with the Exodus (1300 BCE) – *Jacob's clan grew into a nation that eventually split into a Northern and Southern Kingdom.*
2. 580 years after the Exodus, Assyria defeated the Northern Kingdom (by then called Israel) in 722 BCE. – *Assyria completely annihilated Israel and dispersed its people to the winds.*
3. 125 years later, Babylon defeated the Southern Kingdom (by then called Judah) in 597 BCE. – *Babylon completely demolished Jerusalem, its walls, the royal palaces, and the Temple. And Nebuchadnezzar dragged many of Judah's key people to live in captivity and serve him in Babylon. BUT, Babylon allowed the Jews to retain their culture, their identity as a people, while they lived as captives.*

How does God's message to his people who were exiles in Babylon speak to Christians living here in the Bay Area now? – *We, too, are to live as citizens of God's [Alternate Kingdom](#) while living at postal addresses in the Bay Area. Christians must be fully engaged in today's world in active while anticipating eternal life with God. We are to live in a balance between the now and the not yet.*

Session objective: To have confidence in God's ability to guide our life path.

Wrap up: PGP reminder → Prayer → let's worship together!

Jeremiah 29:1-14 New Living Translation (NLT)

A Letter to the Exiles

29 Jeremiah wrote a letter from Jerusalem to the elders, priests, prophets, and all the people who had been exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. 2 This was after King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the court officials, the other officials of Judah, and all the craftsmen and artisans had been deported from Jerusalem. 3 He sent the letter with Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah when they went to Babylon as King Zedekiah's ambassadors to Nebuchadnezzar. This is what Jeremiah's letter said:

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4 This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: 5 "Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. 6 Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! 7 And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare."

8 This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let your prophets and fortune-tellers who are with you in the land of Babylon trick you. Do not listen to their dreams, 9 because they are telling you lies in my name. I have not sent them," says the Lord.

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10 This is what the Lord says: "You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. 11 For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. 12 In those days when you pray, I will listen. 13 If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. 14 I will be found by you," says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land."

God Has a Plan - handout

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