



Pastor's Pen

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

Dear Bethel Church family and friends,

Grace to you and peace from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I pray you are having a great fall, resting in the comforting arms of our heavenly Father. For those of you looking for details on last week's Argentina trip for the City-to-City 10th anniversary celebration, be on the lookout for RE Calvin Reese's upcoming article.

If you were with us last month, you will remember that our latest study is on what the Apostle Peter calls God's "very great and precious promises." As I said then, the reason we are spending this time exploring our Lord's guarantees to His people is that too many of us have forgotten or don't know what those promises are. It is my prayer that by the time we reach the end of this series, we'll all better understand the pledges God has made to us as His daughters and sons. Not only that, but I hope we remember that our peace and rest as His chosen people depend not on our current circumstances but on God, who even now is bringing His promises to fruition in our lives.

This month, we'll turn to the Old Testament book of Jeremiah for our promise. Most of us have probably seen the passage from Jeremiah 29 listed above on a wall plaque or poster at some point. But do you know the context of these verses or why they are such a precious promise to us? Many I've talked to would have to honestly say no, so let's start with some context.

The 29th chapter of the book of Jeremiah is a letter from the prophet in Jerusalem to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. These exiles were the people taken

in the first and second waves of extradition from Judah, which took place in 605 and 597 BC. Both Daniel and Ezekiel were part of the Babylonian deportations of the Jewish elite and ruling class. The Jewish prophets among the Babylonian captives were busy falsely prophesying that God would perform a miracle and deliver Judah from its enemies. In fact, they were saying that all those currently exiled would soon be returned to the Promised Land.

But Jeremiah's prophecy of the future is far different. In his letter, the prophet begins by telling the exiles to settle down and make homes where they are. Why? Because they are going to be in Babylon for a while, 70 years in fact. Not only that, but Jeremiah tells them they are to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer. 29:7). Pray for our enemies? Pray for their prosperity? Even today, as we look back on the cross, it's a message we have a hard time consistently obeying.

It's in this gloomy message that God gives his people this magnificent promise for the future. You see, this isn't an individual promise. The word 'you' here is not singular. It's plural. These are corporate promises for God's covenant people. And what does the Holy One of Israel guarantee His children? God promises us as a congregation that when we seek Him with all our hearts, we will find Him, just as the people of Bethel have been finding the Lord for the last 261 years. Indeed, when the Lord's children join their hearts and minds in prayer as a community of faith, not only does God vow to hear us, but He will answer our supplications. Perhaps, if He tarries in His return, the Lord will grant this congregation another 261 years to share the gospel with the people of this community. Yes, our Lord has plans for us as the body of Christ in this place for our future and for our hope. As we look to the changes God has in store for us as a congregation, let us hold firmly to these good promises and rejoice that our God reigns. Blessings in Christ, Pastor Chris

this week

Sunday's sermon:

Christian Identity

1 Peter 2:4-10

events

Reformation Party
10/26 at 5:00 pm

Men's Bible Study
10/29 at 6:00 am

GriefShare
10/29 at 1:00 pm

Called Session Meeting
10/26 at 2:00 pm

GriefShare
10/28 at 6:30 pm

Senior Citizens Lunch
10/29 at 12:00 pm

Mentors & Moms
10/30 at 9:30 am

volunteer schedule

Infant Nursery
Douglas McCarter
& Laura Clinton

Toddler Nursery
Drew & Morgan
Brown

Worship Training
Abby Chidester
& Jenni Quinn