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God's Plan for You – Really?
Series: The Weeping Prophet
The Village Church at Shell Point
Evening Service
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I. **Promises Promises**

- A. **Jeremiah 30:3** (ESV) —
 - 1. 3 For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.”
- B. **Jeremiah 31:13** (ESV) —
 - 1. 13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
- C. **Jeremiah 31:31–33** (ESV) —
 - 1. 31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,
 - 2. 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.
 - 3. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- D. **Jeremiah 32:38–39** (ESV) —
 - 1. 38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.
 - 2. 39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.
- E. **Jeremiah 33:6–8** (ESV) —
 - 1. 6 Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.
 - 2. 7 I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first.
 - 3. 8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.
- F. Promise in our study
 - 1. **Jeremiah 29:11** (ESV) —
 - a. 11 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.
- G. Easy to take that individually

1. Things are tough going – nice to know God has other plans, plans of welfare
 - H. But this is a corporate promise – to the people of Judah in exile
 1. What about applications to us?
 2. Yes, but we need to understand what that promise meant for exiled Jews before we try to apply it
 - I. When we do that, we may discover that the plans for welfare are not what think they are!
- II. **Jeremiah 29.11 in Context**
- A. **Letter**
 1. From Jeremiah in Jerusalem
 2. To exiled Jews in Babylon
 - B. **Occasion**
 1. Jews had been deported to Babylon
 2. Prophets in their midst
 - a. Exile would be short and sweet
 - b. Wouldn't be long before they'd be home
 3. False prophets
 - C. **Jeremiah 29:1–6 (ESV) —**
 1. 1 These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.
 2. 2 This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metal workers had departed from Jerusalem.
 3. 3 The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It said:
 4. 4 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:
 5. 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.
 6. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.
 - D. **Summary**
 1. Be there a while!
 2. Build houses – don't rent, buy!
 3. Plant gardens – become agriculturally productive
 4. Eat produce – engage in the local economy
 5. Marry and have children – great place to raise children!
 6. Have your children marry – great place to enjoy your grandchildren!
 7. Multiply in the midst
 8. Ryken: ... agent for Babylon Realty
 9. Just settle down; connect with the community

- E. Jewish response – “But this is Babylon!” “We want to be back in Jerusalem, our home town!”
1. Ps 137 is typical
 2. **Psalm 137:1–9** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.
 - b. 2 On the willows there we hung up our lyres.
 - c. 3 For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
 - d. 4 How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?
 - e. 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!
 - f. 6 Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!
 - g. 7 Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, “Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!”
 - h. 8 O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us!
 - i. 9 Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!
 3. They don’t want to hear a message from Babylon Realty
- F. God’s response – “Bloom where you’re planted. And right now, I’m planting you in Babylon”
1. It gets worse
- G. **Jeremiah 29:7** (ESV) —
1. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
- H. Summary
1. **Seek the welfare of the city**
 - a. Babylon???
 - (1) The very embodiment of all that is evil
 2. **Pray for the city**
 - a. Babylon???
 - (1) Why would we want to pray for these wicked people in this wicked place?
 3. In its welfare, you will have welfare
 - a. If you seek the welfare of the city
 - b. If you pray for the city
 - c. You will have welfare (well-being)
 4. The quality of life that you create here in Babylon, for Babylonians, with Babylonians, will be a blessing to you
- I. **Jeremiah 29:8–9** (ESV) —
1. 8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream,

2. 9 for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD.
 3. Warning about false prophets
- J. **Jeremiah 29:10** (ESV) —
1. 10 “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.
 2. Promise to bring back to Jerusalem
 - a. After 70 years
- K. **Jeremiah 29:11** (ESV) —
1. 11 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.
 2. Plans start now
 - a. Include 70 years in exile
 - b. Settle down
 - c. Build homes
 - d. Marry and have families
 - e. Enjoy their grandchildren
 - f. Become economically productive
 - g. Seek to be a blessing to their community and their city
 - h. Find their welfare, in Babylon, to the degree that they become a blessing to Babylon
 3. Part of the plan
- L. **Jeremiah 29:12–14** (ESV) —
1. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.
 2. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.
 3. 14 I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.
- M. Plans are contingent on a relationship with God
1. God doesn’t wave a magic wand and bless rebellious people
 2. Plans are for those who desire God, trust God
 - a. Wholeheartedly
 3. Plans include restoration to the land
 - a. But not for 70 years
 - b. Adult exiles will not come back
 - c. Why? This is a corporate promise
 - (1) Not to individuals
 - (2) But to Judah in Exile
- N. **Jeremiah 29:15–32** (ESV) —
1. 15 “Because you have said, ‘The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon,’
 2. 16 thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of

David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your kinsmen who did not go out with you into exile:

3. 17 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, behold, I am sending on them sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like vile figs that are so rotten they cannot be eaten.
4. 18 I will pursue them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a terror, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them,
5. 19 because they did not pay attention to my words, declares the LORD, that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets, but you would not listen, declares the LORD.'
6. 20 Hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles whom I sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon:
7. 21 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying a lie to you in my name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall strike them down before your eyes.
8. 22 Because of them this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: "The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,"
9. 23 because they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the LORD.' "
10. 24 To Shemaiah of Nehelam you shall say:
11. 25 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You have sent letters in your name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,
12. 26 'The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to have charge in the house of the LORD over every madman who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and neck irons.
13. 27 Now why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who is prophesying to you?
14. 28 For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, "Your exile will be long; build houses and live in them, and plant gardens and eat their produce." ' "
15. 29 Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the hearing of Jeremiah the prophet.
16. 30 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:
17. 31 "Send to all the exiles, saying, 'Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah of Nehelam: Because Shemaiah had prophesied to you when I did not send him, and has made you trust in a lie,
18. 32 therefore thus says the LORD: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah of Nehelam and his descendants. He shall not have anyone living among this people, and he shall not see the good that I will do to my people, declares

the LORD, for he has spoken rebellion against the LORD.’ ”

- O. Summary of 29.15-32 – plans of welfare require trust in the context of deception, opposition
 - 1. Don't listen to the false prophets
 - P. Essence of the promise of 29.11
 - 1. **Corporate**
 - 2. **Plans include living in Babylon**
 - a. Settling into a community
 - b. Becoming productive members
 - c. Becoming a blessing
 - d. Raising families – children and grandchildren
 - e. Praying for the city
 - f. Finding their welfare in the welfare of the city
 - 3. **Until God brings them back** (next generation)
 - a. Bloom where they are planted
 - b. Babylon
 - Q. Planted in Babylon? Unthinkable!
- III. **Biblical View of the City**
- A. Problematic views
 - 1. Thomas Jefferson: [referred to cities] as pestilential to the morals, the health, and the liberties of men.
 - 2. Rev. John Todd (1830's): Let no man who values his soul, or his body, ever go into a great city to become a pastor.
 - 3. Ralph Waldo Emerson (referring to Philadelphia as a great city): If all the world was Philadelphia, suicide would be extremely common.
 - B. **Cities as locus for evil**
 - 1. Anonymity of the city that breeds license, wicked industries
 - 2. Pieter Bos (Dutch): In modern cities decisions are often made haphazardly and with no regard for God. As a result, the city falls under the influence of the principalities and powers of Satan. Satan uses the anonymous nature of the city as an environment which encourages the growth of evil. People flock to the cities seduced by the lie that there they will survive. The results are evident in the environment, in the economy, in social problems and in resistance to the gospel.
 - C. **Cities from theological perspectives (Two Cities)**
 - 1. Augustine – *City of God*
 - a. Conflict between City of God and the City of Man
 - b. Augustine: This race we have distributed into two parts, the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities, or the two communities of men, of which the one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil.
 - c. Identified the city of man as Babylon
 - 2. Boice: Scripture unfolds the history of two distinct groups of people, each

having a distinct origin, development, characteristics and destiny. These are two cities or societies. The earthly society has as its highest expression the city cultures of Babylon and ... Rome. The other is the church, composed of God's elect. The former is destined to pass away. The latter is blessed by God and is to last forever.

3. Revelation – Babylon is the locus of evil in the world, the Satanic city
 - a. Interpretive questions in Revelation
 - (1) Babylon past?
 - (2) Babylon future?
 - (3) Rome?
 - (4) Unbelieving Jerusalem?
 - b. When we think of Babylon, we think of the urban center of evil
- D. The beginning of the city prefigures the evil dimensions of the urban center
 1. **Genesis 4:16–17** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.
 - b. 17 Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.
 2. Summary of Genesis 4.16-17
 - a. Cain – Wanderer rebelled and settled
 - (1) Built a city
 3. Gen 4 and 5 depicts two societies
 - a. Heritage of Cain
 - b. Heritage of Seth (son of Adam and Eve following death of Abel)
 4. **Cain – Genesis 4:18–24** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.
 - b. 19 And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.
 - c. 20 Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.
 - d. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.
 - e. 22 Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.
 - f. 23 Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me.
 - g. 24 If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold."
 5. Summary of Genesis 4.18-24
 - a. Development of culture
 - b. Resulting in multiplication of evil by Lamech
- E. **Babel – Genesis 11:1–4** (ESV) —

1. 1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words.
2. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.
3. 3 And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.
4. 4 Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”
 - a. Babel = Babylon

F. **Jonah and Nineveh**

1. Wicked city
2. **Jonah 4:1–11** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.
 - b. 2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.
 - c. 3 Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”
 - d. 4 And the LORD said, “Do you do well to be angry?”
 - e. 5 Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.
 - f. 6 Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.
 - g. 7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered.
 - h. 8 When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”
 - i. 9 But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.”
 - j. 10 And the LORD said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night.
 - k. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

3. God had compassion – for the wicked city

G. God sent them to **Babylon**

1. The epitome of wickedness

2. Perspective is changed
 - a. Started as captives as chastisement
 - b. Now, no longer captives, but residents
 - c. Ryken: Nebuchadnezzar did not take them to Babylon. God sent them there. The exiles were not captives – they were missionaries.
3. God was going to establish the city of God in the midst of the city of evil
 - a. Ryken: What should God’s people do when their zip code places them in Satan’s precincts? When God’s people were captives in Babylon, they might have expected God to tell them to run away. Or revolt. What he did instead was tell them to make themselves at home. The gist of Jeremiah’s prophecy was that God was going to build *his* city in the middle of Satan’s city.

IV. **God’s Call for Exiled Judah**

- A. While they were waiting for the consummation of the promises by the return to Jerusalem...
 1. Here’s where we find our application
- B. **Jeremiah 29:5–6** (ESV) —
 1. 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.
 2. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.
 3. Establish presence in city
 - a. Invest in real estate
 - (1) Quit renting, taking part time jobs
 - b. Engage in economically productive activity
 - c. Have families
 - (1) Most important thing Christians can do, in enemy territory, is have godly families
 - (2) Evangelism by multiplication
 - d. Commit to the city
 - (1) Unpack the bags; not going back anytime soon
 4. Jacques Ellul: We have our job to do in the city. We have seen that down through history God’s answer to the construction of man’s closed world was to move in just the same. And if he is there by his hidden presence, he is also there by those whom he sends. Our task is therefore to represent him in the heart of the city.
 5. Ryken: If God calls you to work, worship, or live in the city, do not resist his call. God loves the city. If you love God, then his heart for the city must become your heart for the city.
 - a. God does not call them to create a Jewish ghetto within Babylon
 - (1) He calls them to engage with Babylon
 - (2) Jesus – salt and light...
 6. Seek the welfare of the city
 - a. **Welfare = shalom**
 - b. Clifford Green: More than the absence of conflict and death, this

rich term fills out the word community by embracing well-being, contentment, wholeness, health, prosperity, safety, and rest.

7. Ryken: God hereby commands Christians to do anything and everything to further the public good. Seeking the peace of the city means being a good neighbor. It means shoveling the sidewalk. It means cleaning the street. It means planting a tree. It means feeding the poor. It means volunteering at the local school. It means greeting people at the store. It means driving safely and helping people with car trouble. It means shutting down immoral businesses. It means embracing people from every ethnic background with the love of Christ.
 - a. Peace means offering the greatest peace available – peace of God
8. Ryken: Christians are able to offer a much greater peace to the postmodern city. What we offer is eternal peace with God through the work of Christ on the cross. That peace is the basis for everything we do in the city. It is what makes us neighborly, compassionate, and charitable. When the city finds peace with God, all will be well with the city.
9. Pray for the city
 - a. **Jeremiah 29:7** (ESV) —
 - (1) 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
 - b. Jeremiah 29.7 – Is that the only place where God’s people are commanded to pray for their enemies?
10. **Matthew 5:44–47** (ESV) —
 - a. 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
 - b. 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
 - c. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
 - d. 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
11. Cf **Psalm 122:6–9** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! “May they be secure who love you!
 - b. 7 Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!”
 - c. 8 For my brothers and companions’ sake I will say, “Peace be within you!”
 - d. 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.
12. Psalm 122.6-9 – prayer for Jerusalem is echoed for Babylon
 - a. Prosperity – economy
 - b. Within walls – safety
 - c. Within palaces – government

d. Within you – people, relationships

V. Conclusion

A. **Jeremiah 29:11** (ESV) —

1. 11 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.

B. Right here

1. Right now

a. Right in the place where you'd rather not be!

2. Plans for welfare

a. A future

b. A hope