

**NBC Devotional**  
**February 2, 2022**  
**“Living in Exile”**  
**Jeremiah 29:4-13**

There are times when things do not go as planned. Things have changed, and at times we feel out of place in the midst of the rapid, and at times, chaotic pace of the world we live in, and we are left to wonder: ‘what is happening?’

If I were to visit your home and or office, there is a likelihood that I would find Jeremiah 29:11 embossed or engraved on something, maybe a plaque, or coffee mug. Oftentimes, when folks are asked to share a favorite verse, one of the regular ones to be heard is “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

This was, for some of us, our go to verse as we began a new year. Have you ever stopped to consider the context for this verse? It was given to God’s people who were living in exile! At times, God’s plan turns out to be different than what we had imagined. Here in this strange land of exile with all of their dreams crushed, no doubt they were longing for the good old days. Yet in the midst of exile, here is what God said through the prophet Jeremiah: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters, increase in number there; do not decrease. Also 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. 29:5-7)

The command for people living in exile is pretty simple: Live! Quit complaining, quit longing for yesterday, live your life for God even in a strange land and a strange time. We are called to be a witness today, not yesterday! Nothing speaks hope for the future like having children. Rather than giving into the despair of their situation, they were told to focus on the future and more specifically, their future hope.

Notice they were instructed to pray for the nation they were living in and the leader. Babylon was a terrible place, yet God said pray. Instead of complaining and railing against all that is wrong, the best thing to do is to keep living and pray!

Make no mistake, living in exile is not a pleasant experience. It is a challenge that most of us do not feel prepared for, yet here we are, and we must trust God and be witnesses for Him. You know that promise that we all love so much? Does it not seem stronger when we understand the context? To people living in a place they would never have chosen, under conditions they could never have imagined, the promise comes to them, “For I know the plans I have for you.”

God has plans for you! Right now, and right where we are living today!

Dr. Ronald J. Blake, District Superintendent of the Indianapolis District Church of the Nazarene