

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 9
WEEK OF AUGUST 9



Growth Group Summer 2020

Seeking and Finding

Week 9 – August 9, 2020 - Jeremiah 29:10-14

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

This week we continue our look at the letter Jeremiah wrote to the first group of Jewish people that were led away from their homes, in Jerusalem, and exiled to Babylon. Though the full Babylonian captivity of Judah did not happen until 587 BC, it began with this group of people in 597 BC.

The good news was that after 70 years had ended, God promised to bring the people back home. The bad news was that an entire generation would spend their lives in exile. God knows that the people need to be able to maintain hope in the midst of their current reality, and so God tells them that one day they will get to go home.

To pray to God with “all your heart” is more than just a reference to our emotions. God is saying when you pray, you are to pray with “all your will and all your energy you will find me”. Prayer is to be an all-encompassing action that believers are engaged in. The idea of God “being found” is also seen in Amos 5:4-6 and Hosea 2:16-20.

There is an underlying assumption of obedience, in this text, that is never really mentioned. God says that after the seventy years of exile have ended, the people will get to go back home. However, it needs to be understood that God does expect them to learn from this experience of exile. If they are going to return home, their obedience is still required.

God also says that He will bring back people who have been exiled and carried away to other lands. These words of hope, in Jeremiah 29, are not just for the exiles in Babylon. God will gather His people from all the nations and places where they have been banished.

The words of Jeremiah do not offer an immediate rescue or quick ending for those in exile. However, the promise of God is that He does have a plan that calls for the blessing of those who no longer feel as though they are home. One day, they will be brought back and they will dwell in God’s presence and God will be with them.



Exploring the Text

Read Jeremiah 29:10-14

¹⁰ This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ 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. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Many of us grew up memorizing Scripture when we were kids in church. Can you remember any of those verses you learned? If you didn't memorize Scripture as a kid, or cannot remember any of them, do you have a favorite Scripture now? If so, what is it?
- 2) Jeremiah 29:11 is often used as a great promise, which it most certainly is. Does it make a difference that it is spoken to a group of people in exile? Can we still apply it to our lives today?
- 3) We often make plans for God, without considering the plans that God might have for us. Have you ever made plans assuming that God was on board only to find out that God wasn't?
- 4) God makes a lot of promises to the exiles in verses 10-14. Which one or two do you think would have given them the most hope? Why?
- 5) The image of harps, being hung on the branches of the poplar trees in Babylon in Psalm 137:1-6, is a haunting one. The sorrow of the people of Judah in exile had brought them to a place where they did not feel like singing anymore. Have you ever experienced something like this? How did you get through it?
- 6) In his sermon, Pastor Paul quoted Zephaniah 3:17 which says, “The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” What do you think Zephaniah is getting at with this last sentence? What does it look like for God to rejoice over us with singing?
- 7) The Hebrew word that is used in verse 11 for “future” can be translated afterward, or backwards. The image, that some have suggested, is that of a person rowing a boat. They are facing backwards and cannot see into the future. They have to listen to someone to help them to safely move forward in the water. The idea, in this context, would be that we back into the future and have to trust God to guide us safely. Is there a place in your life where you are backing into the future and struggling to trust God?