

A Hope and A Future Jeremiah 29:11

He Is Risen!!

It's Easter Sunday. The holiday of all holidays.

This Easter is different than any Easter we have seen before in America. For centuries, on Easter Sunday, people have gathered in churches and homes to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. This year is different. It's an unprecedented time with lots of uncertainty. What will the economy be like in just a few months? I lost my income, how am I going to survive? I know someone that has the virus, what will happen? You may even know someone who has passed because of it.

These are times filled with fear and people concerned for themselves. Food and personal items were being bought up and shelves were empty leaving people worried that they would be able to get what they needed. People are looking to the government and the medical community for answers. There are theories galore of where this came from, what was the purpose, and what is going to happen.

Kids can't go to school, play sports, or hang out with their friends. Weddings and funerals are having to be put off. We constantly hear about more and more cases popping up from the CoronaVirus.

And in all of this, OUR GOD IS STILL ALIVE AND WELL. HE IS WORKING OUT HIS PLAN. HE IS NOT SHAKEN OR CHALLENGED OR SURPRISED. FOR THOSE HE LOVES, HE IS WORKING THIS OUT FOR OUR GOOD. THE SOVEREIGN GOD WILL USE THIS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE. FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, WE HAVE A HOPE AND A FUTURE.

Read Jeremiah 29:11

When life gets uneasy, unsettled, rough, or we go through unprecedented times, for the future is bleak there are messages everywhere that resemble this mentality...

"When things get bad take the prescription of Jeremiah 29:11 a few times, with a full glass of water, and call me in the morning. I think you'll feel better."

This is one of the most misused verses I think in scripture. There are many that are taken out of their context. So often, when we open up scripture, we look at it through our eyes. I mean this: I look at it through my bent, my expectations, my culture, my troubles, or what I want it to say instead of simply receiving what God is saying.

When we look at a scripture verse such as Jeremiah 29:11, we need to know the context. What is the passage that is wrapped around this verse saying? Who is it spoken to about? And we must read it in context to the rest of the story of

God. Then we can find the principle in scripture. When we read the Old Testament this is especially true.

Jeremiah 29:11 is a verse of hope, but it is a verse written to the Israelite people around 600 BC. Does it have meaning to us today? Yes. It conveys a promise of welfare and a future and a hope. That God has a plans for those that are His. But, not in the way most people have used it. The idea isn't health and wealth. The idea is that our God will never leave us when we are in the middle of the fire. While on earth, we are going to have struggles. We are going to deal with the fallout of sin all around us. But, as people of God, as His children, we have a bright future and because of that a great hope.

Sin has affected our world in a tremendous way through sickness, war, death, disease, broken relationships, tremendous hurt, murder, rape, and other heinous things done to human beings. So is God a liar, or is the welfare and hope and future different than warm fuzzies and a great and easy life when I choose to follow God or I do A, B, and C of what God asked me to do?

Let's read Jeremiah 29:1-14

Let's look at a few details to get the context:

1. written in Jerusalem to the exiles
2. Why was it written?
 1. Israel had sinned. they chose to worship other gods/idols
 2. Deuteronomy 26:16-18; Lev 26
 1. There was punishment for turning from God
 1. No one is exempt-we all have sinned
 2. To worship another god is sin
 1. It's very easy to fall into this trap
 1. some idols we deal with today: our health, our wealth, a vehicle, a relationship, our house, status from a job...
 3. God through Jeremiah (as well as many other prophets) warned them
 1. worship God alone, turn from your sin and turn to Him
 2. we have been forewarned of our sin and what will come of it
 1. Wrong doing and judgment are in everyday life...we even yearn for it
 2. Why are we be surprised when God judges or angry that He does?
 1. He is a perfect, righteous, and fair judge...and the only One truly able to judge in a way that is best for all of us
 2. His ways are pure and good, they promote freedom
 3. The hard part is that we all deserve judgment
 4. Because of their sin, God gave them over to the Babylonians, however some were still in the land of Judah
 5. Those who were in Judah would not turn away from sin

1. They thought since they got to stay in Judah, they weren't that bad, they weren't getting judged, they were not listening to God
2. Their life was only somewhat altered-they were in the same homes, land, culture, , they still had the temple, etc.
3. Their pride and arrogance got them in trouble. They had taken for granted all God was doing for them. So...God turned them over to their sin that they so badly wanted to follow. It was to their demise. Eventually they would be conquered, the temple destroyed.
4. For them things hadn't changed, it wasn't that bad compared to those taken captive
 1. Whenever we compare our situation to another persons situation and use that to judge if we are good enough is never a good thing. There will be someone better than you.
 2. Well, I have done some pretty good things. But have you ever told a little lie? guilty. Have you ever lusted after something that wasn't yours to have? guilty Have you envied a neighbor for something they have? guilty As a child, did you ever dishonor your parents? guilty
 3. God alone is the judge. He gives the standard of 'good enough'. That standard is perfection. That is why His death, burial, and resurrection is so important.
2. Then there were those taken to Babylon
 1. Their situation was bad
 1. their lives were completely uprooted: lost home, culture, family members to war and probably to the struggle of travel from Jerusalem to Babylon, lost all their things, probably indecent acts done to many of them
 2. This was a result of their sin, but they would eventually would turn to God
 3. They were captive for 70 years though. How come God didn't fix their problems?
 1. They were warned, just as we are warned so many times; do this and this will happen
 2. Sin has consequences...sometimes they aren't too burdensome, sometimes they are heavy
 3. The part of sin we try not to recognize is that our personal sin, effects others...sometimes its a light burden, sometimes it leaves great scars upon other people
 4. 2 options
 1. you can pout, and be in misery
 2. you can own your wrong doings and make the best of your situation for yourself and others...even your enemies

3. By doing this, they earned respect with their enemies, they eventually did what Jeremiah tells them to do in v. 5-7.
 1. The story of Daniel
 1. Daniel 1
 2. There is a principle here for us: seek the peace and prosperity of the place in which God has put you...and pray for it. Pray for it in our homes, our work place, your local church, your city, your nation.
 1. Let your presence and willingness (in a Godly and biblically centric way) be part of the reason those things thrive
 2. Earn the right to be respected, so you can be heard when the time comes
3. As a thought to ponder:
 1. There were Israelite people who were following God, who chose to honor Him in the midst of a nation that chose to go away from the principles of God that their nation was founded upon
 2. Those people were affected too.
 1. This is what sin does when it takes root. It leaves no stone unturned and affects everyone around it.
 2. Take ownership of your sin. Surrender your situation to God, confess your sin to God, don't let sin's destructive nature take root and have any more impact on yourself or others around you. Turn and flee from it and turn to God.
4. Jeremiah wrote the letter we read to the exiles to give them a dose of truth, but also to encourage them
 1. Their situation was not ideal...they needed HOPE
 2. Their situation was not what they wanted...they needed HOPE
 3. Their future as a people was at stake...they needed HOPE
 4. the promise God gave them though Abraham seemed bleak...they needed HOPE
 5. They didn't need hope that could fail them, they needed a hope that was sure, that stemmed from something that is unchangeable, unshakeable, and unwavering.
 1. This kind of hope is only found in God's Word
 2. Some of us may have sin that is out of control and we feel defeated, like we can't get out from under it. There is HOPE
 3. Some of us may be dealing with the effect of past sin or someone else's sin. There is HOPE

We are going to look at 3 kinds of people in the letter Jeremiah penned.

1. People with No Hope (verses 4-6)

1. The exiles had lost everything, they pretty much had nothing but what was on their back and what they could carry.
 2. Life was full of challenge, difference, unsettledness, hardship, fear, and even more. There were in a completely new place.
 3. Imagine the fear of some, the questions, the frustration and anger mounting, maybe even the pointing of fingers
 4. A person with no hope in a situation is a miserable person, a defeated person, lost person, a lonely person.
 1. they will have no peace and rarely will have small moments of joy that is usually laced with doubt and fear
 2. Usually, this ends with absolute misery to the point where anger gets the best of them so they give up, self destruct, or take it out on others
 5. How should we handle those situations when we feel like there is no hope?
 1. Choose hope and move forward in Christ
 2. Accept our situation and let God have His way
 3. One of the first steps in turning tragedy into triumph is to accept the situation courageously and put ourselves into the hands of a loving God, who makes not mistakes.
 4. A second step is to surround yourself with godly people who will pray for and with you and point you back to scripture
 5. We all need hope
 6. You may say, "I don't need God and others, I can do it on my own!" For a short period, you are right. But, eventually this will let you down because now you are chasing a false hope.
2. People chasing False Hope (vs. 28:3; 6-9)
1. find hope in things that are lies or are short term fixes
 1. people, jobs, relationships, finances, easy fixes, status, physical ability, looks, mental abilities
 2. They were listening to prophets that were saying what they wanted to hear
 1. answers were being given by those not speaking God's words
 2. they were things that were going to let them down and probably even get them killed
 1. How? because they weren't going to make the most of where they are at. They would fight against their situation and make it worse for them and their children...because of false hopes of something better
 3. They were probably thinking "God will save us", "He is a loving God so He won't let us go through a hard time."
 1. Hebrews 12 tells us that God disciplines those He loves
 1. His discipline is good and it is for our good

2. It may be tough, but it helps us to see how great a chasm there really is between goodness and evil, between His love and the love of the world, between truth and partial truth
 3. Could it be that God allows us to go through something tough now, to save us from something devastating later?
 2. James 1:2-4 tells us we will go through trials, but those trials have a hope when we choose to walk through those trials seeking God's wisdom in those trials
 4. False hopes found in lies only lead to more devastation. That drink, that purchase, that relationship will help
 5. The Israelite people were to be peacemakers. They were not to fight, but to make the situation work out the best. They were to bring a sense of prosperity and goodness to the situation. They were to help make those that took them captive successful, to live among them in a manner that would build everyone up in an honorable way before God. They were to find a way to still obey God's commands while in a different culture.
 6. 1 Peter 2:18-25
 7. To indulge in false hopes is to miss, or at best, taint what God has for us
3. People of Hope (vs 10-14)
1. Biblical hope is not like worldly hope
 1. Worldly hope
 1. like a wish, based on circumstance, uncertain and filled with maybe's and fortune and luck...that can turn bad
 2. It's short sighted and about the Here and Now.
 3. If it emotionally is making me feel good, there is hope
 2. Biblical hope
 1. is anchored upon God's Word
 2. confident expectation; based on something sure
 3. present circumstances can't shake it
 4. My emotions doesn't affect hope, dictating if I feel hopeful or not... as a matter of fact, Biblical hope actually resets our emotions
 2. Through Jeremiah, God told the exiles they would be there 70 years before they would experience His promise
 1. He said, "I will do as I said. I know, I remember the plans I have for you. They aren't to hurt you or destroy you, but to give you a hope and a future.
 2. Many of them would die in this 70 year period. So what was the hope? The future.
 3. There hope and future was described in Jeremiah 33:14-16.

1. “The day will come, says the LORD, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good things I have promised them. “In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. In that day Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this will be its name: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’ For this is what the Lord says, David will have a descendent sitting on the throne of Israel forever.”
2. Their hope and future was found in the Messiah
 1. He would restore them and they would once again flourish
 2. 70 years later the Babylonians would be conquered and the Israelite people could be restored back to their land.
 3. This promise was written to Israel, to God’s chosen people. Does this have anything to do with us, any effect upon us? ABSOLUTELY.
 4. Through the nation of Israel, through the line of David a king would be born, an eternal King. A King whose throne would never be overturned. A King who would overcome the sin of the world, by taking the sin upon Himself. A King who would bring peace and true prosperity because of it. Sin’s effects would be dealt with. Sin’s curse would be overcome. There could now be freedom from the bondage and destruction of sin.
 5. There would no longer be a need for sacrifices to cover over the grossness of sin, but it would wash away the filth and ugliness of sin.
 6. Decay and wrought, struggle, sorrow and grief that was brought about by sin in the garden of eden to effect all of mankind would no longer plague our lives.
 7. Rejection and fear of rejection would no longer be an issue because true peace would reign. Shame would not have its place in our hearts and minds, but only joy and purpose.
 8. This is what Easter sunday points to. A hope and a future.
 9. This hope and future began with Jesus dying on the cross and then rising from the grave
 10. Sure, we have to live in this world and deal with the stuff of this world, so we honor God in the midst of it right where we are planted. But the sure hope is the future with Him. The good work He began in us will be completed.
 11. For now, we are spiritually renewed, even though these bodies are decaying. We are washed clean from the inside out, even though we still have to deal with the stain of in upon us till we die. For now, we have been opened up to the goodness of God and can walk in that goodness and can choose to do live in that

goodness. God's goodness is found in a life that honors God. In Matthew 11:28 and 29, Jesus said His burden is light. Jesus said that in it there is rest, or inner peace, a peace that is beyond words. A peace that leads to rejoicing that flows from joy that is overflowing out of you.

12. The empty grave, the removing of that gravestone points to the 2nd coming of Jesus. For now, heaven is in our heart. But, when Jesus comes back, heaven will be realized spiritually, physically, and emotionally.
13. There is a promise found in the verses directly after Jeremiah 29:11.
14. Read Jeremiah 29:12-14
15. Israel lack of faithfulness and God's unswerving faithfulness to them is for our benefit. It helps us to understand the importance, the value, the need to run from sin and worship God alone.
16. Likewise God has promised believers in Christ certain things that are not applicable to the human race in general. For those who are in Christ, God has promised that our sins are forgiven and we stand before God justified. God has plans for those in Christ, and those plans are good. This gives us hope. This gives us a future.