

## 02.28.10 / Jeremiah 29:1-7

**Passage Insight**

God is a god of renewal. From the creation of the world, He knew that people would choose themselves and that He would have a plan to bring them back to Him. No matter how bad things get (and it doesn't get any worse than being separated from God because of our sin), the gospel tells us that there's good news: we have a way out through following, trusting, and obeying God rather than ourselves.

The fact that God's people would be in Babylon, a far off, foreign land, was not news to Him. In fact, He sent them there, and this letter is a reminder to them that they have not been forgotten or abandoned. God continues to pursue them despite their lack of faith and their disobedience, and in His pursuit He calls them to action – not action at some later date when things are exactly as they should be – not action “someday” when everything is perfect and convenient – and not action at some point in the future where they can really understand the big picture – he calls them to action NOW, where they are, as the people they are, people called to God's purpose.

For those of us who trust Jesus to redeem our lives, to save us from our sin and brokenness, we are not just a saved people – we are a saved people who are called to do the very work of Christ, which is redemption and renewal. When we are saved, our old selves pass away, we are cleansed from our sin, and the Holy Spirit actually takes up residence inside of us. Over time, He changes us into the likeness of God Himself. Fascinating. And if we are becoming like God, then our actions should also reflect those of God. In other words, the more like God we become, the more we will do the things that God does.

There is such beauty in this gospel promise, that even in our brokenness, our weakness, God uses us to transform the things around us. The pain of sin, the pain of separation from God, the pain of exile . . . all these things are redeemed by being purposed by God, put to use and transformed for His glory as we love those in our place of exile . . . nothing is wasted in God's economy.

In this passage, God's people are called to several concrete things:

- They are called to build – they are called to establish a place of permanence, to accept their current reality and to invest where they find themselves.
- They are called to plant and eat – in other words, they are called to productive labor that not only sustains themselves, but also nourishes those around them – we are called to be productive in the marketplace and in the home.
- They are called to take – God knows where they are, who they are, and the resources that they will need, and they are called to accept the resources that God provides.
- They are called to give – When we belong to God, we ourselves are provisions for others, and we are to freely give.
- They are called to leave a legacy – the calling to increase, to multiply, to NOT decrease, is so relevant for us to hear as we so often focus only on ourselves and we can gain for ourselves rather than create for others.

The common thread throughout these commands – build, plant, eat, take, give, establish, invest, leave a legacy – is permanence. God is the foundation, which will not be moved, which will not be shaken. As His people, we are called

to be the same, to be oaks of righteousness (Isaiah 61). All too often, American society is transient. We are constantly on the move, from town to town, house to house, job to job, and even on an internal level, thought to thought. The more than 55% divorce rate is evidence of this, as is the shallowness of our relationships and our willingness to move on to the next shallow relationship without sticking around to intentionally deepen those we've already been given. This reality results in a society that is less and less able speak to the nature of God's permanence, to the nature of the eternal, unchanging purposes of God. If we are called to be an unshakable, immovable people, our lives must reflect this. They should look permanent, solid, immovable – spiritually and, in most cases, physically and geographically. The question for us is this: "How are our lives contributing to this trend, and what is our responsibility to do otherwise?"

### Application Questions (feel free to use the ones that best meet the needs of your group)

#### Waiting for Someday to Get Started

- 1) Where in your life are you waiting for things to be perfect before you will take action?
- 2) What is that one thing you are waiting for?
- 3) Is it really just one thing?
- 4) What else are you waiting for?
- 5) If that thing never comes, how will you justify your lack of action?
- 6) If Jesus brings His kingdom forth in the darkest of situations, with the smallest of resources, by using those who love Him, what does this say about your situation?
- 7) What do you need to remember or know about Jesus in order for you to move forward and take action?
- 8) Who in your Community Group can follow up with you about this?

#### Leaving a Legacy

- 1) If you died today, what would your family say about you?
- 2) What would your friends say?
- 3) What about someone who'd never met you?
- 4) What would you like them to be able to say about you?
- 5) How do you need to be changed by Jesus in order to have these things be true?
- 6) What do you need to repent from in order to catalyze this change?
- 7) Who in your Community Group can you share this with sometime this week?

#### Permanence

- 1) Where are you choosing your next step in life based on what it is that you want?
- 2) In which relationship(s) are you settling for shallowness instead of seeking depth?
  - a. What's the biggest obstacle to depth in the relationship?
  - b. What are you afraid of in this?
  - c. What trait about Jesus most convinces you that He can overcome this obstacle?
- 3) How did you make the decision to live where you live right now?
  - a. Where does Jesus factor into this decision?
  - b. If you knew you would never move again, how would this change the way you interact with those who live near you?
- 4) What are you trying to build here in the Triangle?
  - a. How long do you expect it to last?

- b. How long should you expect it to last?
- c. If you could build, create, start anything you could imagine, big or small, right here in the Triangle, what would it be?
- d. What do you want to see happen as a result of this thing?
- e. How has Jesus equipped you for the task?
- f. How can your Community Group help?

**Sources**

- ESV Study Bible Commentary