**Sunday 07 June 2020-When we hit Rock Bottom-Jeremiah 29:1-14**

**Introduction:**

Good day Church, I trust that you all had a blessed and safe week in the Lord. For the month of June we will be doing a Series on the topic-**When we hit Rock Bottom.**

I know like for me and many others- The bathroom had become our closest companion. A hiding place when the sorrow inside of our souls become too much to keep hidden from the outside world. We would lock the door behind us and can sit in there for a very long time, crying and sobbing. And with Jesus we can enjoy such enthralling fellowship, but this particular rock bottom seemed to permit no visitors. At times it feel like *God, don’t you hear me?*

Rock bottom came with a demon designed to persuade me that Christ was unwilling to come close in my pitiful condition. Than I am reminded of the verse in *Jeremiah 29:11(NKJV)*

**“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope**”

We will never properly understand this verse unless we know something about its background. The single most important fact is that it was written to the Jewish exiles in Babylon who had been forcibly removed from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Having been uprooted from all they held dear, they now live hundreds of miles away from home, in the very heart of worldly pomp and pagan idol worship. All their dreams and hopes had been smashed. Deep inside they wondered, **“How could God have let this happen? If we are truly his people, how did we end up here?”** *And they wondered if God had forgotten them*. In all their confusion and despair, they made two very human mistakes.

**1) They thought they would never end up in Babylon.**  That led them to false confidence.
**2) They thought they would never get out of Babylon.**  That led them to despair.

We face the same danger when we **Expect what God has never promised, or 2) Refuse to believe what he has promised.**

At one of our church in Nigel, where I serve as acting minister, before the reading of the word, the congregation sings **“Every promise in the Book is mine."**  To which I answer yes, but not every promise means what we think it means. Our danger with Jeremiah 29:11 is that we will quote it without considering its context. We have all heard it said that when you hit rock bottom, there is nothing to do but look up. *Here is a message for those who have hit rock bottom*. And thanks be to God, it is a message of enormous hope.

As we think about this beloved verse, keep two things in mind:

**God will not always do what we expect him to do,
But he will always do what He says He will do.**

**I. God is thinking about us all the time.**

**“I know the plans I have for you” or “Think about you”**

God thinks about us!

*That may be the most important statement you’ll ever hear*. The God of the universe thinks about us. He considers us, he knows us, he remembers us, he keeps us in mind. He knows who we are and where we are. Not for one second are we ever lost or forgotten for His heart is so big and His knowledge so vast that no one ever gets lost in the shuffle.

**God Never Forgets His Children**

Even when we do have good or bad thoughts about each other, we tend to forget after a while. That’s why we say **“out of sight, out of mind."**  **But God never forgets his children. *Even though he has the whole world to rule, He never forgets his own*.** God is not just saying, “I’ve got plans for you,” he’s really saying, “I have been thinking about you.” That’s much better because it is exceedingly personal. A boss might say to an employee, **“I’ve got plans for you,”** which might mean a lot more work, but if the boss says, “**I’ve been thinking about you,”** that means something else entirely.

The Jews really needed to know this because they were in exile in Babylon, far from home, carried away against their will, held against their will, under the absolute power of the Babylonian king, and able to do only what he permitted them to do. God has just said, “**You’ll be returning home but not for 70 years” (v. 10)**, which was good news and bad news, good because it meant they wouldn’t be in Babylon for ever but bad because 70 years is a long time to be in exile. And God says, “You think I’ve forgotten about you. You know that you are here because you forgot me, and it’s true that I am punishing you for your disregard of my commands, but my punishment does not diminish my affection for you. You are forever in my thoughts. You are still my people. I have not forgotten you.”

I find great comfort the following truth. *God knows what he is thinking even when we don’t*. Many times I have said, “Lord, what are you doing? Why is this happening?” So much of life makes no sense. The good and the bad, the happy and the sad, it all gets jumbled together with apparently no rhyme or reason, and even if I say to myself, “God has a plan,” it’s rarely clear to me. But God knows what he is thinking even when his thoughts are hidden from me.

**God’s Thoughts Toward Us Are Good.**

**“Thoughts of peace, and not of evil.”**

It is not enough to know that God is thinking of us. We need to know what he is thinking. In this case he makes it clear. **“Thoughts of peace, and not of evil.”** Various translations render this phrase differently:

**“Plans for welfare and not for evil” (ESV).
“Plans to take care of you, not abandon you” (MSG).
“Plans for good and not for disaster” (NLT).
“’Plans for well-being and not for trouble” (NLV).**

This answers our greatest question.*Is God for us or against us?*

Remember that this verse was given to the Jews while they were in Babylon to give them hope that they were not forgotten and that Babylon would not last forever. It is not a “**Get Out of Babylon Free**” card.

This verse would provide great encouragement to the Jews …

“I sent you to Babylon.”
“I am thinking about you while you are in Babylon.”
“I have not forgotten you in Babylon.”
“I am with you in Babylon.”
“I will give you a future in Babylon.”
“I will bring you home from Babylon.”

Mostly it is God’s way of saying …

**“I still love you even though you have blown it badly, and I still have great plans for you in the future, and the future starts now, not just 70 years from now.”**

The devil always prey on our doubts, fears and weaknesses or when we find ourselves in Rockbottom situation.The next time the devil comes to you with a dark insinuation, tell him to go to hell or where he comes from.

**What is God trying to do when he allows his children to go through hard trials and deep suffering?** There are several answers to that question. **First, God is trying to purge us of sin and to purify us of iniquity**. **Second, God uses suffering to test our faith.** **Third, God uses times of difficulty to humble us.** When things are going well, we tend to get puffed up about our accomplishments. **Fourth, God uses hard times to prepare us to minister to others. He comforts us so that we may comfort others.** **Fifth, God uses hard times to prepare us for a new understanding of his character**. In the furnace we discover God’s goodness in a way we had never experienced it before.

**3. God intends to give us a future filled with hope.**

**“To give you a future and a hope.”**

Another versions say **“to give you an expected end.”** That’s actually a good way to translate the Hebrew. God is not just giving a vague promise that things are going to be better sometime, somewhere, in some situation. That’s true, of course, but this verse has a very specific focus. *God has an appointed end for his people, and nothing will hinder them from reaching that appointed end*. For the Babylonians it was seventy years down the road the same God who raised up a pagan king (Nebuchadnezzar) to judge them will raise up another pagan king (Cyrus) to deliver them. And neither pagan king was aware of his part in God’s plan. Each man acted according to his own free will, and God worked through those kingly decisions to bring his children home.

**God has no unfinished plans!**We will see what God intended from the beginning.

Seen in this light, Jeremiah 29:11 becomes a great comfort, especially when we are going through hard times. It teaches us that God thinks of us, that his thoughts toward us are good, and then when his purposes have been completed, he will bring our troubles to their appointed end.

This is the “hope and future” we all need.

**Ever-Increasing Hope**

What, then, should we say in response to all of this? Our first and greatest need is to submit ourselves to our Heavenly Father and say very simply, **“Lord, you know even though I don’t know. You see what is ahead even when all is dark to me. You have a purpose even when my life seems to be going in circles. Nothing that is happening to me has come to me by chance. I bow down before you and say, ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Amen.”** Surely we all need to pray like that every single day.

Let us go into this new week with the assurance that God has a plan for us and we not need to feel abandoned. Amen.