

Intro: Yesterday AM having morning coffee and watching news. They did something very common this time of the year, perhaps you have seen one of the "2015 Year in Review Retrospective." 30 or 40 quick snapshots of major events...Stunned For a moment I felt like I was in an episode of "Twilight Zone!" Honestly...it was overwhelming...and disconcerting!

Earthquakes in Nepal Multiple Mass Shootings Acts of Terrorism here and abroad
Caucasian woman NAACP "identifying" as African American: "I don't understand the question..."
Bruce Jenner, saying...It's just so wonderful to get up and look in the mirror and be comfortable with myself...
Planes blown up, Same Sex marriage celebrated as "right and normal"

As I was driving into church thinking about all I had seen the words of Heb/Peter came to mind...and I thought...SO TRUE!
Heb 11:13 "And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth."
1Pe 2:11 "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul"
Here is the reality...as those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we DON'T fit in! We ARE Aliens/Strangers!

So...If you are like me...feeling a little displaced and disoriented...Confused and Concerned...How Do You Respond?

- Run and Hide: Christians done that for Centuries: Desert Fathers/Mothers; Monks did in Middle Ages:
- Compromise: Fit In: Capitulate to the pressure of culture, blend in, surrender biblical distinctives:
- Shout @ darkness: Scream, denounce; Shake your fist; Ridicule and Shame, Go to war

Honestly, none of those are Biblical responses to the avalanche of sin and insanity that surrounds us!
But, the Good News is that we DO have some direction in the bible that will help...Informs our response!

Turn with me in your Bibles to Jeremiah 29, and let's look today at the Gift of Promise! Jer 29:1;4-13 Pg 557
This is the text of the Prophecy of Promise God spoke through Jeremiah to the people carried away into Captivity
They truly WERE Aliens and Strangers in a foreign land! People of God, People of faith living in Pagan Country!
When we look at what God told THEM to do...We find some help...and some hope for where we are!

1. LIVE The Place Where God Has You. Jer 29:1;4-6

Accept with a gracious spirit the place God has allowed you to be!

Understand that you are there for a reason!

- Don't Run, Don't Compromise, Don't Shout...Live your life as a Child of God! BE who you are!
Don't Live in the past...Longing for what Was
Don't Live for the future...refusing to engage with where you are...
- Get on with life! Embrace it...Enjoy it...Live it!
Build houses...settle down
Marry and have families
Plant gardens and vineyards
- Plan to INCREASE and GROW...Not DECLINE and FALL APART

Listen...all of the other options are less than what God would have you do! Jesus told us that...why are we confused?

John 17:13-18 Pg 766 "As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them INTO the world! (Not rescue...Safe!)

Jesus is so very clear...We are to be IN the World...But not OF the world!

2. BLESS The Place God Has Placed You! Jer 29:7

Listen to me...Oh...this is so very important...Don't HATE the world in which you live...LOVE IT!

Why? BECAUSE God does! And if we love Him...then we Love what He loves...

We JUST celebrated that truth. "For God so LOVED the World!" Not because it was loveable...It is His Heart!

Jesus loved His world! Paul loved his world...Peter loved his world...And now...we feel ok to HATE OURS?

Different ways to BLESS the place you are!

- Seek the peace: Blessed are the peacemakers...Be a man or woman of PEACE wherever you are!
- Seek the Prosperity: Do everything you can to make your world a better place!
- Pray to the LORD for it!: Seek the face of God for your family, neighborhood, workplace...City, County!

We, as the people of God...are to lead the way in those things that God wants to do in our world!

Of COURSE we aren't going to reach or convince everyone...Jesus Didn't, Paul didn't, None of Gt revivals of History did
But...we CAN make a difference...and THAT is what God Calls us to!

Two different ways we are going to be doing that in the next 6 months

- Pray for the place you live: 24 Hour Day of Prayer: Jan 30-31
- Seek Peace/Prosperity: CityServe: Coming up in May, Going back out to our Community
Approaching 50 different churches in AA County

Pray with me that God will raise up 10 or 20 that will take the challenge to Seek The Peace and Prosperity of our County

3. WATCH OUR For Prophets/Priests/Pastors/Preachers That Tell You What You Want To Hear! Jer 29:8
When everything around you seems to be falling apart, it is human nature to go to the voice that promises peace!
In Jeremiah's day there were that would say whatever people wanted to hear...for the right price!
Vs 8: "Do not listen to the dreams YOU encourage them to have!"

Things are no different today! Just turn on the TV or Radio, Do an internet search, Go to the Christian Bookstore!
Airwaves and shelves are FULL of preachers, pastors and prophets telling you just what satisfies YOUR desires and fears
Jeremiah says...No...don't fall for it! Jesus said "In this world you WILL have trouble...be of good cheer, I have overcome!"

Paul warned Timothy...and through Timothy he warned you and I...be careful!
2 Tim 4:1-5 Pg 843: "gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear!!!"

4. TRUST The Promise God Makes To Bless You. Jer 29:10-13

- I will come to you: The promise of His PRESENCE in the future, He hasn't abandoned you: Feels like it
- I have plans for you: The promise of fulfilling every word He has said is still there!
- I plan to prosper you: Give you "shalom" Peace, Prosperity, Blessing, Happiness, "The Good Life"
- I plan give you hope and future: Lit to give you the happy outcome you desire!
- I will listen to you: Pay attention to what you have to say, and listen closely
- I will be found by you! You will KNOW I am with you! You wont have to wonder...is God in this!

Do you know how I would interpret the essence of what God is saying.

Don't WORRY about what is going on around you!

Yes it looks bad. Yes it is painful. Yes it is confusing. Yes you feel alienated and Alone in this world...Strangers YOU ARE

But don't despair, don't run and hide, Don't Shake you fist at the darkness all around you!

I've GOT this...Don't Worry. Do you REALLY think I can't handle what is going on?

- LIVE the Life I called you to live.
- Be MY people in a world that doesn't know who I am
- Bless them...don't curse them!
- Pray for them...For God to prosper and bless and bring about good!
- Hold on to the promise of God...and refuse to be shaken!

CONCL: So HOW do you do that when the you look at the year in respective and your head spins and your heart aches

Phil 3:13-14

- Not that I have already obtained: I'm not there yet...I don't yet hold the promise in my hand
- I press on: I refuse to give up, refuse to surrender, refuse to hide, refuse shout
- Forget what is behind: Every victory, ever defeat, every blessing, every hurt...PAST!!!
- I press on to take hold of what Jesus took hold of me for! He has called me, Blessed me, PUT ME HERE!!!
It may be good, or bad, happy or sad...
But HE HAS A REASON!
I may be in Jerusalem...or in Babylon...
Wherever I am...I am going to BE His child!

HOW DO WE LIVE?

Paul in Phil 2: 14ff, Children of God in a crooked and depraved generation...shining like stars, holding out...
THAT is how we are to live!

God YOU Allowed me to be where I am!

- I am going to LIVE here
- I am going to BLESS everyone you bring across my path
- I am going to WATCH OUT For those who would deceive me
- I am going to TRUST your promise...and Wait for your blessing!