

We've heard it said that God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives. It's easy to agree when we like the plan. But sometimes, God's plan turns out to be different than what we were thinking. You have a job that you really like. A job that you're good at. But one day, the boss says, "John, we need to make some changes. We're going to have to let you go." And you go home and say, "Lord, what is happening? I thought I was where you wanted me to be! I thought I was doing what you wanted me to do! What is going on?" Sometimes, God's plan is different than what we were thinking. Or maybe someone you love is fighting cancer. You were counting on God to come through for your family just like He always has. You were counting on a miracle! But this morning, the doctor calls back with the test results that you don't want to hear. Sometimes, God's plan is different than what we were thinking.

The same thing is true of the Jewish people in Jeremiah 29. The year is 597 BC. God is judging the nation of Judah because of their unfaithfulness. The Babylonians have attacked Jerusalem. They've taken 3000 prisoners back to Babylon. Including the king, the court officials, and the craftsmen. And the Jews are saying "This isn't supposed to happen to us! We're the chosen people! We're the apple of God's eye! What is going on?" How about you? Has your world been rocked in a way where you are asking God, what is going on here. This is not the way I had my life planned". Maybe its time to remember, that whatever happens, God's Got A Good Plan for Your Life!"

The Jewish people have a beautiful history of God coming through for them in times of crisis. In Exodus chapter 3:7, the Lord told Moses that "I have seen the misery of my people. I am concerned about their suffering at the hands of the Egyptians. So I'm going to bring them out of the land of Egypt." And that's exactly what happens. In Exodus 14, God brings them through the Red Sea. 40 years later in Joshua 24, the Israelites inherit the Promised Land. God's plan was accomplished in the lives of His people. And in 2 Kings 19, the Assyrian army invaded the land of Judah. The people were scared. The commander of the Assyrian army said, "No one can deliver you out of the hand of the King of Assyria. Surrender to us now, and we will let you live!" But Hezekiah prayed to the Lord. And that very night, an angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 people in the Assyrian camp. Almighty God had come through once again! God's word was accomplished in the lives of His people. And so when the Babylonians invade the land of Judah in 597 BC, the captives are thinking, "This isn't going to last long. God is going to come through for us like He always does!

But God throws them a zinger. In verse 10 it says, "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place." When we read this verse, we think, "Wow, that's beautiful. In seventy years, God is going to bring the people back to the Promised Land. That's awesome!" But the Jews were thinking, "You mean we gotta live in this rotten country for the next 70 years? Most of us are going to be dead by then! What kind of a plan is this, God?"

What these Jewish people did not see is that they needed these 70 uncomfortable years to realize they needed to get right with the Lord! They needed to apologize for the mistakes of their past. So when you look at the big picture, you can see that God is working behind the scenes in the hearts and in the lives of the Jewish people. Even though they can't see it. My friends, God's plan is not always what we thought it was going to be too. But God's plan is always best. Even if we don't understand it at the time. Even if we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Even if we would never have chosen this path for ourselves.

For example, I don't think there are too many people who would say, "Thank you God, that I lost my job today. I needed for this happen so that you could fulfill your glorious plan for my life. In Jesus' name, Amen!" I doubt that anyone would pray that prayer. But we know that in all things, God works together for the good of those who love Him. We know that when God shuts a door, he opens another door. We know that God is working through every event in our lives to make us more and more dependent on Jesus for everything we need. My friends, God's plan is not always the easiest plan. But it is the BEST plan. And that brings us to Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord." I think if we knew everything that was going to happen to us ahead of time, we would go crazy. We would be overwhelmed. God knows this so he dishes out life to us in chunks, 24 hour time frames called days. That way we can better handle those rough times. Remember Life by the inch is a cinch. Life by the yard is hard. Thank goodness we don't know the future.

But verse 11 reminds us that even though we don't know all the plans for our lives, GOD knows the plans He has for us. God sees our tomorrows before they become our 'todays.' If you were up in the Good Year blimp, and you were watching a parade, you could look down and see the entire parade. You could see the beginning of the parade. The end of the parade. And everything in between. That's how God sees your life. He sees the beginning of your life. He sees the end of your life. And He sees everything in between. Psalm 139:16 says "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." God knows the plans He has for you.

And then Jeremiah says that “God has plans to prosper you and not to harm you.” When I talk about God prospering us, I’m not talking about everyone in church winning the Megamillions jackpot. I’m talking about enjoying the everyday blessings of God. A place to live. Food to eat. Families to love. And communities to pray for. All of these things are a sign that we are experiencing God’s plans to prosper us and not to harm us.

Then Jeremiah says that God has ‘plans to give you a hope and a future.’ For the Jewish people, that meant going back to the promised land. But for us, it means going UP to the Promised Land. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have a hope and a future that goes far beyond the parameters of this life. You have a hope and a future where you will be living in eternity with God himself. You have the hope all your sins were washed away at the Cross of Christ. You have the hope that all things will indeed work together for good. You have the hope that Jesus is with you every step of the way in sickness and in health. You have a certain hope that God’s promises in your life will come true.

God is someone who has a good plan for us. God is a planner. And, the plan is a good one. No need then to worry. Stay the course. Stick with the Plan.