

Day 21

Seeking Shalom

Jeremiah 29:7: And seek the peace [Shalom] of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.

In 1972, Larry Norman released *Only Visiting This Planet*, considered one of the best albums in Christian Music. The last line of the last song states:

“What a mess the world is in, I wonder who began it
Don't ask me, I'm only visiting this planet”

Fifty years later, I think Larry is still correct as you look at the state of our world. It may even be easy to throw up our hands and just wait for Christ's return. However, as followers of Jesus we are called to partner with God as ambassadors of reconciliation in this world.

In Jeremiah 29, God had Jeremiah send a letter to the exiles in Babylon. They were people forcibly removed from the promised land. They did not belong in Babylon. They had every right to be angry and frustrated. They could have sought and prayed for the destruction of Babylon. Instead of thinking “what a mess” and “we are only visiting,” they were told to fully engage in the life of the city. They were told to seek the peace and welfare - The Shalom: wholeness, thriving, flourishing - of their captive city.

Our call as followers of Jesus is the same. Jesus' first message was “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Jesus was breaking in the Kingdom of God to restore Shalom, or right relationship with God, others, ourselves, and creation. As Christ followers, it is our call to partner with God by continuing the work that Jesus started to “preach the gospel to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, to bring sight to the blind, and set free those who are downtrodden” (Luke 4:18). God's work is about restoration of people in which we are called to participate. Even when Jesus was on earth, He sent His disciples out to further His reign: “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give” (Matthew 10:7-8).

As His current day disciples, we are called to partner with God in the same ministry of restoration. We absolutely must care for the spiritual lives of people, but we are to also care for the physical needs of others. Failure to do so demonstrates a dead faith (James 2:14-17) and a lack of love.

Reflection: What is one thing I can do to bring Shalom to Northwest Ohio?