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For The City

We Are Sent To Our City

Jeremiah 29:1-4

"Cities are pestilential to the morals, the health, & the liberties of men."
Thomas Jefferson

"Let no man who values his soul, or his body, ever go into a great city to become a pastor." **Reverend John Todd (Philadelphia - 1830)**

Main Idea: I have been Sent by God to Glorify Him in my Immediate Context

*"These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, & to the priests, the prophets, & all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. This was after King Jeconiah & the queen mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah & Jerusalem, the craftsmen, & the metal workers had departed from Jerusalem. The letter was sent by the hand of Elasar the son of Shaphan & Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It said: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.'" **Jeremiah 29:1-4***

I. God is Active in Our City – Jeremiah 29:1-3

"Rather than responding with humility & repentance, the people of Judah primarily lived as islands unto themselves, disregarding both the Lord's commandments & the increasing danger that resulted from their disobedience."
Chuck Swindoll

*"The Babylonians had done terrible things to the Jews. They had destroyed their city, ransacked their temple, ruined their economy, removed their leaders, & enslaved their populace. Babylon had done its worse..." **Phillip G. Ryken***

*"Most postmodern cities are like Babylon. They are cities of man, ruled by Satan, & Satan is doing all he possibly can, all in line with his condemnation, to turn them into suburbs of Hell... What should God's people do when their zip code places them in Satan's precincts? Run away? Revolt? The gist of Jeremiah's prophecy was that God was going to build His city in the middle of Satan's city." **Phillip G. Ryken***

II. God Has Sent Us To Our City – Jeremiah 29:4

*"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon." **Jeremiah 29:4***

*"One of the first steps in turning tragedy into triumph is to accept the situation courageously & put ourselves into the hands of a loving God, who makes no mistakes." **Warren Wiersbe***

Conclusion: The exiles of Jeremiah's letter were not captives, they were missionaries! **We are not captives in New York City, we are missionaries!**

"The city is full of care, & he who has to go there from day to day finds it to be a place of great wear & tear. It is full of noise, & stir, & bustle, & sore travail; many are its temptations, losses, & worries. But to go there with the divine blessing takes off the edge of its difficulty; to remain there with that blessing is to find pleasure in its duties, & strength equal to its demands. A blessing in the city may not make us great, but it will keep us good; it may not make us rich, but it will preserve us honest. Whether we are porters, or clerks, or managers, or merchants, or magistrates, the city will afford us opportunities for usefulness. It is good fishing where there are shoals of fish, & it is hopeful to work for our Lord amid the thronging crowds." **C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)**

We are sent to our city for God's glory & its good. But what role does Salem Church play in this effort? It all depends on your point of view:

- **The Church as a Cruise Ship** – Offers Christian luxuries to the family (i.e. sports, entertainment, childcare services, networking, etc.). **Big Questions:** Can this church improve my religious quality of life? Will it meet my needs? Do I like it?
- **The Church as a Battleship** – Made for mission, fights against the powers of darkness in the city, church members pay the pastors to reach the city and see church programs as the primary instruments of mission. **Big Questions:** How is my church reaching the lost, helping the poor, engaging with culture?
- **The Church as an Aircraft Carrier** – Exists to equip people to engage in the mission everyday, to send core teams to plant campuses/churches, focuses on being a disciple-making & church-multiplying factory instead of keeping it all in house. **Big Questions:** How can my church equip me to make disciples in my city & send me to multiply churches in my city?

Invitation: I am sent, you are sent, and Salem is Sent TO our City! But first we must answer God's call to salvation available only in Jesus Christ.

Sources & Further Reading Opportunities:

- *Jeremiah, Lamentations* – F.B. Huey (1993)
- *Jeremiah & Lamentations* – Phillip G. Ryken (2001)
- *Be Decisive* – Warren Wiersbe (1996)
- *Commentaries on Jeremiah & Lamentations* – J. Calvin (2010)
- *Jeremiah & Lamentations* – R. Davidson (1983)
- *New Bible Commentary* – D.A. Carson (1994)
- *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the OT* – Warren Wiersbe (1993)
- *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* – J.C. Laney & R.B. Hughes (2001)
- *Insight for Living: Jeremiah* – Chuck Swindoll
- *Gaining by Losing* – J.D. Greear (2017)