

We Are the Outsiders
Jesus and the Outsider, Pt. 6
Jeremiah 29:1-14

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May 20, 2018



I. PRAYER

- i. Would you supernaturally give our hearts an unexplainable motivation to give our entire lives to the mission of reaching the lost.

II. INTRODUCTION

a. Let me ask:

- i. How do you motivate someone to give their entire life to a particular cause or mission?
 - Right? We all only have one life on this side of eternity and so to ask someone to give their whole life to something, is a big ask!
- ii. I don't know if you saw this several years ago when a small Dutch Organization called Mars One made the news headlines because the purpose of their company was to settle the world's first colony on Mars and they were looking for volunteers.
 - They were literally looking for people who would volunteer to spend the next decade of their lives training and preparing and sometime in the 2020's or 2030's go to Mars and settle there.
 1. Not to ever come back.
 2. It is feasible that we'll have the technology to get to Mars.
 3. It's not feasible right now that we are close to having technology that can come back from Mars.
 - And guess what...
 1. Over 100,000 people applied for this mission. They applied to go to Mars, never to return.



iii. What motivates someone to literally give their whole life to something like this?

- I was reading an article in Popular Science where they were interviewing some of the candidates that were selected out of this pool of initial applicants.¹
- And they were asking this question: Why would you sign up for this and literally give your life to it?
 1. And most couldn't answer the question sufficiently...
 2. One said: "It has nothing to do with anything rational...It's almost the same as love. You want it for some reason you cannot really explain..."
- But, you know what, God has designed us to desire meaning and clarity in our lives.
 1. He has designed us to want to focus our entire lives on something that we believe in and are passionate about.
- We want our lives to have a clear reason and to devote our lives to a clear purpose that literally has out-of-this-world significance.

iv. Here's why I bring this up:

III. SERIES PLUG

- a. Today, we are going to finish up a sermon series that we have been in called "Jesus and the Outsider."

¹ <https://www.popsci.com/article/science/why-thousands-people-are-willing-die-mars#page-3>



- i. **In this series, we have learned that Jesus has given the church a clear mission and a clear message.**
 - We are to go to the ends of the earth and proclaim the clear and complete gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - And we have been studying how Jesus Himself reached the outsiders and brought them in to the Kingdom of God.
 1. And so if you missed any of these sermons, I encourage you to go online to listen to them as we have been learning from the example of Jesus and also forming a theology of reaching those who do not know Jesus.
- ii. **But, this morning, I want to close the series by helping us to understand the reality that God has called us as His children and as His church to give our entire lives to this mission of reaching the outsider.**
 - And when I mean our entire lives...I mean our entire lives.
 1. That every single part of our life...our work, our home, our leisure...would play a part in this mission that we have been given.
- iii. **How do you motivate someone to give their entire life to something?**
 - And I believe that we find the motivation to give our entire lives to the mission that God has given us when we realize that this mission is the very reason that we are here.



1. If you want to understand how your whole life fits together with a clear purpose and with clear meaning that is attached to something with out-of-this-world significance...we find it in this mission.
 2. If God has rescued us from our sin, if he has guaranteed us a place in his Kingdom for all of eternity...then why are we still here in this broken world?
 3. Because he has a mission for us.
- iv. **And this morning, I want us to have a clear understanding of our role and purpose in this life and in this world.**
- To do that, I'd like for us to study a passage from the book of Jeremiah.
 1. Because this passage contains an incredible promise about our future.
 2. But, we need to be careful not to read this promise out of its context.
 3. Because to do so would mean that we would miss not only the substance of the promise but also the instruction of what we are to do with our lives today.

IV. JEREMIAH 29:1-14

a. So, open your Bible to Jeremiah 29.

- i. Let me give you a little context.
 - After the reign of King Solomon, Israel split into two Kingdoms - The Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
 - During these times, God appointed several prophets who would hear from God and deliver messages from God to the people.



- One of those prophets called by God was Jeremiah.
 1. And Jeremiah was tasked with warning the Kingdom of Judah that if they did repent and return to faithfulness to God, that God would send an enemy nation to defeat them and carry them into Exile.
 2. They would be removed from the promised land.
- Well, in the 590s BC, that is what happened.
 1. The Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and in several stages carried Judeans back to Babylon into exile.
- So, in our passage this morning, Jeremiah is back in Judah and he is writing a letter to several of his fellow Judeans who were carried into exile over in Babylon.
 1. One of the reasons that Jeremiah writes this letter is because there were some other Judeans who were over in Babylon in Exile who considered themselves prophets as well.
 2. And they were telling the people of Judah who were in Exile that they heard from God that they were soon going to be rescued.
- So, Jeremiah, who is a true prophet of God, felt he needed to write a letter and explain to those in Exile what God was truly saying.

b. Read Jeremiah 29:1-14

- i. I mean, this was probably not the letter that you wanted to receive.
 - Yes, there are amazing promises in this letter, but those aren't for 70 years!
 1. The life expectancy then wasn't long.



2. 70 years means, you are not going to live through the fulfillment of these promises, but your children and your grandchildren will.
- ii. **So, when we look at this letter from a strictly historical perspective, we see that God is giving these promises to the Israelites as a people.**
- I am going to rescue your people. I am going to bring your people back from Exile and they will be restored to me.
 - This wasn't an individual promise, this was a communal promise.
 1. But, in the midst of all of this, God gives the individuals, who will be spending their days during these 70 years of exile, purpose and instructions.
 2. He makes it very clear: I sent you to Babylon and I have an assignment for you in Babylon.
- iii. **And so, if we zoom out even further and look at this passage from a biblical context...we notice that the Bible has this theme of exile woven throughout its pages.**
- Jeremiah 29 is a localized incident where God's people living in the promised land were carried out into exile by God's providence and given instructions from God on how they are to live while in exile.
 - In the same way, the Scriptures tell us that the church, God's people, have a citizenship that is in God's Kingdom, yet our lives now are being lived in exile in this world.



1. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:20 - "...our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..."
 2. As followers of Jesus, our citizenship is in God's Kingdom, and we are here in this world waiting for Him to come get us and bring us into that great promise which is Jeremiah 29:11 - "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."
 3. My plans are for you to spend eternity in my Kingdom.
 4. And so, as the church, we must consider ourselves like the exiles in Babylon who were waiting the 70 years to be brought back to the promised land.
- The Apostle Peter also makes this connection very clearly...
 1. Give context from 1 Peter 1:1
 2. Read 1 Peter 2:9-12
 - We see here the same thing we see in Jeremiah 29.
 1. This is who you are.
 2. You are God's people but you are in exile.
 3. Here is how you are to live, here is your purpose while in exile, until he come for you.
- iv. The very reason that we are here is because God has given the church a mission.



- And our motivation to devote our entire lives to this mission come when we realize that this is not our home, there will be a day that God comes for us, but until then, we have a specific mission and a specific purpose to fulfill.
- And listen, the more we are convinced of this. The more that we see every facet of our lives through this lens...the more faithful and joyful lives we will live for the glory of God.

v. **This is crystal clear in Hebrews 11.**

- Hebrews 11 is a famous passage of Scripture that some have dubbed the Hall of Faith.
 1. This is because Hebrews 11 lists out all of these people that have lived faith-filled lives and have done great things for the glory of God through that faith.
- And there is a nugget of truth that shows us what it was that fueled the faith of these great men and women of God.
 1. Hebrews 11:13-16 - "These all died in faith, not having received the things promised (Jer 29:11), but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."



- It is when we understand who we are - citizens of the kingdom of God and strangers/exiles on this earth - and what we have been called to do, making disciples of all nations, that we will begin to live this life with faithfulness and joy.

c. And you know, for this entire sermon series, we have been talking about how we as followers of Christ are the insiders.

- i. We have been brought into the family of God in and through Jesus Christ.
 - Just like all mankind, we were made aware of our sin before God and how we did not deserve his love but rather his judgement.
 - But God sent Jesus to save us and we put our faith in Jesus. Who became a man, lived a righteous life in our place, and died in our place on the cross so we could have our sins forgiven and our relationship with God reconciled.
 - And since we are reconciled to God we are now his children and citizens of his Kingdom.
- ii. And as his children, we have been sent as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God into this world to go to the outsiders to proclaim the gospel and bring them into the family of God as well.
- iii. But looking at Jeremiah 29 and these other passages...the reality is that when it comes to this world, we are the outsiders.



- We are the ones who do not belong here but have been sent here with an assignment and a mission.
 - We are the exiles. We are the sojourners.
- iv. And it is clear in Scripture that when we embrace the fact that we are exiles on assignment - that is when we can begin to find the motivation to devote our entire life to what God has called us to.
- And if we go back and look a little closer at Jeremiah 29, I believe that we will find some key truths that will help us embrace our role as outsiders in this world.
 - So, I want to give us three ways we embrace our role as outsiders from Jeremiah 29.

V. THREE WAYS TO EMBRACE OUR ROLE AS OUTSIDERS

a. #1 – Live an Ordinary Life Among the Lost.

- i. In Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, what was the very first thing he instructed them to do?
 - **Read v.5-6.**
- ii. In other words, settle in. Don't live your life not willing to put down roots because you're hoping that one day you're going to leave soon.
 - Unpack the suitcase and put your clothes in the drawers.



- Build a house. Meet your neighbors. Get your kids in school.
 1. Because you're staying a while.
- iii. **There are some Christians who think that what the Bible calls us to do as Christians is to isolate ourselves from the world.**
 - Like we are supposed to live according to God's Word and we should not be in the presence of ungodliness else their filth rubs off on us.
 - But the Bible does not call us to isolate ourselves from the world but rather to live in and amongst the world.
 1. Live ordinary lives. Have a house. Get a job. Do things for fun. Live life in and amongst those who do not know Jesus.
 - Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11
 1. "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—¹⁰ not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one."
 - Paul is saying we have problems when it comes to affirming someone as a follower of Jesus when the way they live their life is contrary to that.
 1. But, I am NOT telling you to not associate with these people who do not call themselves Christians.



2. NO! We are to live ordinary lives among these people.
- iv. If you go back to 1 Peter 2, we see that Peter says that as exiles we should live honorably amongst unbelievers and we should proclaim the excellencies of God to them.
- So, the call on our lives as exiles is to live ordinary lives with the lost.
 1. There is nothing special about us other than that we have the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - But in the midst of living ordinary lives, we do not conform to the ways of the world but remain faithful to the Word of God and look for opportunities to share about the hope that we have found in Christ.
 1. I love how Steve Timmis and Tim Chester put it: **“Live an ordinary life with Gospel intentionality.”**
- v. Three times in Jeremiah 29:1-14 we see that God specifically says that HE was the one who sent them to Babylon. (v.4, v.7, and v.14)
- It wasn't Nebuchadnezzar...he was just a pawn in God's scheme.
 - And in the same way that God had a scheme when it comes to sending His people into exile over in Babylon, he's got a scheme in your life.
 1. His providence touches your life as much as anyone else's.
 - And this means there is a reason that you live where you live.
 1. There is reason you have the co-workers you have.



2. There is a reason you keep running into those people.
 3. There is a reason that God has you here in Northern Virginia.
 4. Don't worry about where God has you next year, we know that right now in his will and his providence, he has you here.
- And he has called you to live an ordinary yet faithful life amongst people that are lost here.
- vi. And this leads to the second way that we embrace our role as an outsider.

b. #2 – Seek the Welfare of the Lost.

- i. So, we know that God has sovereignly ordained that we would live in this community at this specific time in the same way he sovereignly sent the exiles to Babylon.
 - And what else does he command the exiles to do in Babylon in Jeremiah 29?
 1. **Read v.7.**
- ii. So, we live ordinary lives among the lost and we have also been called to seek their welfare.
 - Now, I'm not a big fan of the word welfare here.
 1. The Hebrew that is used is that great word Shalom.
 2. Shalom refers to a peace and prosperity that is complete and whole.
 - So, the command here is to work in your community to help achieve a peace and a prosperity that is complete.
 1. It's physical, spiritual, mental.
 2. It encompassed all spheres of justice.



- iii. **And it makes me wonder...what does it look like for us individually to seek the shalom of our neighborhoods and workplaces and what does it look like for us as a church to seek the shalom of Herndon?**
- Do we, as individuals and outsiders in this world, pray for our neighbors, our co-workers, and our friends – that they would find shalom in their lives?
 1. Just imagine with me if all of us created a habit of not only getting to know our neighbors and co-workers, but regularly praying for them on their behalf.
 2. Think of how that would change your attitude in your heart towards them and even your willingness to engage them with the hope of the gospel?
- iv. **As exiles in this world and as representatives of the Kingdom of God, our King has commanded us to seek and pray for the shalom of the those who are lost around us.**
- If you want to embrace your role as an outsider, then put some new glasses on that help you to see the people around you in a different way.
 1. As people that you have been called to pray for and people that you have been called to literally care for.
 2. Nothing will make a person more willing to hear the message of the gospel from you than when they are convinced that you truly love them, care for them, and are after their joy.
 3. Whether they reciprocate it or not.



- Who in your life do you need a change of attitude towards?

c. #3 – Embrace Suffering and Wait for Prosperity

- i. Jeremiah was warning the exiles to not listen to the false prophets who wanted to take a verse like Jeremiah 29:11 and twist it to mean that God is promising you worldly prosperity in this life.
 - God makes no such promise.
 - In fact, he tells us in 2 Timothy 3:12 –
“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
- ii. God has sent us as His ambassadors into a warzone...into a world that has been ravaged by sin and although we have the promise of eternal life in his kingdom where there will be no more sin, we have a mission to complete here.
 - And here, we should not expect prosperity but rather we should expect suffering.
 - See, there is nothing wrong with experiencing worldly prosperity.
 1. By global standards, all of us here do.
 - But the problem is when we make prosperity the mission.
 1. Because when we make prosperity the mission of our life, we have now begun to live like an insider in this world and not an outsider who carries the hope of the Kingdom of God with them.



- iii. **So, in your neighborhood, in your workplace, at school, or wherever you are...we have a choice to make.**
- We can choose to live our life in such a way where we want the insiders of this world to see us as just another insider...an ordinary person who conforms to this world.
 - OR - we can live our life knowing that we are actually outsiders sent from God to live an ordinary life with a mission.
 1. And listen, choosing to live your life and embracing your role and mission as an outsider means you'll invite suffering into your life.
 - Do you want people to see you as another insider or do you want people to see you as an outsider?
- iv. **Sharing the gospel with someone and inviting them to come to church can be a risky move relationally.**
- Some people are uncomfortable with that.
 - But the question that we have to ask ourselves is this: *Do I hesitate at engaging someone with the gospel because I don't want to be seen as abnormal?*
 1. But if we embrace our role as an outsider, we are embracing being abnormal.
- v. **Living our life by putting others before ourselves and seeking their welfare above our own...means voluntarily putting others comforts over our own.**
- Putting others prosperity over our own. Inviting discomfort in our life out of love for others.



- So, another question to ask ourselves: *Am I willing to serve and love others **only** after my needs are met?*
 1. But if we embrace our role as an outsider, we are putting our hope in the prosperity and comfort of God's Kingdom...we're saying that my needs are met there so I can fully give of myself here.

VI. CONCLUSION

a. Grace Hill, we are the outsiders in this world.

- i. And we are here - God has not brought us home - because he has given us a mission.
 - A mission in this very place at this very time.
- ii. Let me tell you this: I believe with everything in me that your joy is found in devoting every single cell of your body and every single part of your life to this mission.
 - In your neighborhood. At your job. In every place.
 - Your life has an incredible purpose with out-of-this-world significance.
 - Everywhere you go, that means God has one of his Ambassadors there armed with the Gospel.
 - Armed with the very thing that can completely transform a person's life.



iii. And your joy is found in embracing that. Going all in. Jumping into that life.

- It's not found in conforming to the world but sticking out for the Kingdom of God.

b. Let's pray for our church. That we would be a church that would embrace our role as outsiders and that we would be faithful to proclaim the gospel and seek the welfare of our town.

VII. PRAY

