

This Sunday, Steve preached the third and final message in our Nation Changers series; “Love My City”. The passage of Scripture He referenced is Jeremiah 29:1-7. For the nation of Judah, there had been a long history of warnings to stop worshipping false idols and to follow the Lord. The culmination of hundreds of years of warnings ends with the consequence of God’s people living against their will as captives in Babylon. The false prophets among them were telling them not to worry, that they would soon be back in Jerusalem. Jeremiah sends a letter, via messenger from where he is in Jerusalem, to the captives in Babylon with a very distinct message from God: *This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 ‘Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.’* Jeremiah 29:5-7

Interestingly Jerusalem means “City of Peace”, and Babylon means Confusion (the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 was the start of Babylon). Throughout the Bible, right through to Revelation, Babylon was always associated with pride, arrogance, idolatry and wickedness.

The content of Jeremiah’s letter could not be more contrary to what these people were thinking and hoping! Their whole existence at that time was uncertain, but here they were being told to: *‘Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce... Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you...’* Jeremiah 29:5-7.

Given enough time, all of us have a tendency to walk in circles. We need the word of God to shine the light, to be the compass, which keeps our bearings heading true. In this beautiful country, we call home, there is lots of uncertainty. We need to keep a better perspective, a Godly perspective. His message is that we shouldn’t put our lives on hold because of an uncertain future.

Four things that stand out from the letter Jeremiah sent to the captives in Babylon:

1. Be rooted (“*build houses and settle down*”)

Which is the best city in the world to live in? The one where God has planted you! There is a theology of “PLACE”: I am where God has determined I should be

until He determines I should be elsewhere!

2. Be productive (“*plant gardens and eat what they produce*”)

We need to be productive not only in business but in our lives. *We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies.* 2 Thessalonians 3:11.

3. Multiply (“*Increase and do not decrease*”)

“*Marry and have sons and daughters*” speaks to a mindset of increase. Getting sucked into negativity because of all that is going on around you in the country (political situations, racism, etc.) leads to small-mindedness. We shouldn’t just SURVIVE; we need to THRIVE!

4. Look outwards (“*Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you*”)

This was a very, very tough ask of God’s people because He was asking them to pray for the very people that had done them harm. We should be seeking the peace and prosperity of our great city, Durban. There may be unemployment, high levels of poverty, inequality, lack of education, abuse of women and children, xenophobia, etc. but we can be part of the solution! It’s often easier for us to sit back and say “they should do something”, but who are “they”? It’s you and me!

Last year, as part of our Nation Changers series, Steve interviewed Russell Curtis. He sent Steve a link to an article published in the Sunday Times live on 12 June 2018 which states: If you are looking for a job, then it’s best you head to Durban. According to the latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey (MEOS), KwaZulu-Natal is expected to increase its workforce by 11% in the third quarter of this year. ManpowerGroup SA managing director, Lyndy van den Barselaar, said tourism projects worth more than R50-billion were planned for Durban ... What an answer to our prayers already!

How are you going to use your words, actions and heart to be part of the solution?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your biggest takeaway from Sunday's message?
2. Nation Changers Events: Are there any outstanding things we need to decide on as a group? If you pledged money on Sunday, thank you VERY much. If you haven't contributed yet, [outstanding events and bank details are here](#).
3. What do you love MOST about living in Durban?
4. Please read the story of Joseph in Genesis 39:2-6. In this story, Joseph was a slave owned by Potiphar - a man who didn't fear God. What impact did Joseph's life have on Potiphar's world even though he was a slave?
5. Have you ever considered how significant your presence is in your place of work and residence? In light of this story, what impact does it have on those around you?
6. Please read Jeremiah 29:4-7. Do you ever pray for our city? If you were to pray for our city, what would you pray? Let's spend some time praying for our city and province (see below). For added fuel remember James 5:16: *"the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."*

PRAYER POINT

Fikile Ndlovu, a member of our church, works for the office of the KZN Premier. She has told us that they are asking churches to pray into five key issues that they have identified: killings (political and other), rape, child abuse, women abuse and taxi violence. Please pray for these things as a group.

"Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Jeremiah 29:7