



Sunday, May 17th

Preacher: Pastor Howard-John Wesley

Sermon Title: 'What To Do In The Meantime - Wandering in the Wilderness Part 5'

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:4-14

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 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. 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." Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the Lord. This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Sermon Summary:

Over the past few weeks, we've been following the journey of the children of Israel as they wander in the wilderness. In this week's message, we jump ahead and find the children of Israel in Babylonian exile. While experiencing this season of oppression, they had to wonder what God was up to in their lives. The COVID-19 pandemic forces many of us to ask similar questions. Pastor Wesley offers four poignant recommendations for what to do in the meantime:

1. **Be Productive in the Midst of Your Predicament** - Your predicament does not limit the possibility of your productivity because our God allows us to prosper in adverse situations. This pandemic has opened up opportunities for us to pursue dreams and visions God has placed inside of us.
2. **Be Prayerful over the Peace and Prosperity of the Land** - There are some seasons in life when all you can do is pray your way through it. Exile forces us to rely on and realize the true power of prayer. The exile of COVID-19 has also exposed the racial depravity of the United States. And while many of us are angry, the first thing we should do is pray because prayer changes things.
3. **Be Protective of Prophetic Sources You Accept** - In exile, you have to be careful about who you listen to. Everyone shouldn't have access to your ears. Specifically, Pastor Wesley advised us to be careful about how much news we listen to because it can make us angry or depressed. You don't just need the current news, you need the timeless Word of God.
4. **Be Patient with the Plans and Promises of God** - God has a promise and plan for our future. In times of uncertainty, we have to trust God's plan. Be patient with a God who's working things out.

Life Application Questions:

1. This week reminded us of the importance of selective listening. What negative voices have too much access to your ears? What positive voices can you utilize to replace them?
2. This message emphasizes Exodus 1:12 to reveal God allowing us to prosper even under oppression. How has the pandemic shifted your definition of prosperity?
3. In this sermon, Pastor Wesley reminded us that this pandemic does not limit our possibilities. What could God be asking you to invest in right now? Think of yourself before the pandemic and imagine yourself after the pandemic subsides. What would you like to be different on the other side?
4. Pastor Wesley remarked that we often treat prayer like an unproven drug. Often before a drug can hit the market, they hold a series of clinical trials to make sure it works. What has been your experience with prayer, and how confident are you in prayer in this moment of your life? What have trials proven to you about the power of prayer?

Spirit Work:

1. Pastor Wesley mentioned that "exile has a way of revealing deficiencies in our prayer life." Take some time to develop a prayer schedule for this coming week. Pay special attention to what you have to move out of the way to make time for prayer. Can you challenge yourself to maintain this time of prayer once the pandemic is over?
2. Pastor Wesley's second point was that the children of Israel were reminded to "Be Prayerful over the Peace and Prosperity of the Land." Write out a prayer for this nation.

Regardless of how you feel about being here and the many issues of this nation, while you are breathing and in gratitude for that breath, pray for this country like never before. When you don't feel like praying, return to your written prayer as a starting point and continue to pray for the nation.

3. 'An expected end.' How do you allow yourself to rest in the knowledge that you are strategically placed by the Father for such a time as this? In your quiet time, seek out the ways to bloom where you're planted.
4. All over the country, people are being forced to be creative by unemployment, school closures, and other elements of this predicament. Look at the elements of this predicament whether it's extra time at home or money in the bank as opportunities. Take one element of your predicament that prior to this sermon seemed like an inconvenience, and think of how you can turn that predicament into a new possibility.
5. As Pastor Wesley encouraged us to be protective of the prophetic sources we accept, he reminded us that when we are in a crisis "we don't need news, we need word" to get us through. In our busy schedules, we can find ourselves having a word deficiency. Pick a daily word or start a daily devotional to guide and strengthen you this week.