

Our Hope and Future

When I seek God, He will find me.

06/04/2023

Week #1

What do you meme?


Core Scripture

// Introduction


- **FUNNY STORY:**
- Often, the reason we misinterpret and misuse scripture is because we look at it in the context of “verses”
- Whether you open your Bible app or physical Bible, you will see numbers before every sentence or two, for the most part.
 - Some translations vary if they are paraphrase styles such as The Message.




// The Bible is not a collection of individual verses

-  2 Timothy 3:16-17 CSB All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
- When the Bible was recorded, it did not contain chapters and verses.
- Over time, the Bible was sectioned into paragraphs, then chapters, then verses, into how we have it subdivided into today.
- This is important to know because we can so easily lock ourselves in as Christians to reading just one verse. We can read the Bible first thru a lense of our desires then searching for the verse that confirms our predisposition. Many Christians make this error. The Bible is meant to be read with an open heart and taken at face value and read thoroughly, not one verse at a time. We don't do this with other books =)
 - We can fall into a trap of The Verse of the Day being both our only devotion and scripture we read that day, but then also read the verse out

of context.

- So how do we read scripture then?
 - In Context - We must know what the verse we are reading is meant to say by reading the scripture around it.
 - This may be a chapter, a paragraph, or even an entire book of the Bible.
 - We must be aware of the cultural temperature too!
 - Knowing what happened throughout the book of Exodus is important to why Egypt had to be fled. Especially when we compare it to the New Testament when Jesus and his family fled to Egypt.
 -  We must look at:
 - What did the scripture mean then?
 - What does the scripture mean today?
 - What is God saying through the scripture for me?
- As we move through this series, we will be taking a look at three scriptures that are commonly misunderstood and naturally misused, even with good intentions. What we will ultimately find is that When I seek God, He will find me. He will teach me the truth - the real truth - that often is different than what the world teaches me AND even different from what some of your favorite TV preachers will tell you.

 // **God's prosperity is more than what I can touch.**

-  Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

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.
- The **common misconceptions** here are:
 - God's future for you is right around the corner, just wait for it!

- God plans for me to prosper - meaning to have wealth, health, happiness, a good job, a picture-perfect family, a good car, no challenges,
- That nothing bad will come my way.
- The truth of this though is that none of these sentiments are true - even when they are said with good intentions.
But hear me out, don't rule out this message just yet, because this sermon too, has a hope and a future for each of us!
Today we are looking at what Jeremiah 29:11 means and how it impacts and grows our faith.

“I tried God. It didn't work.”

Is your desire “the pursuit of happiness” or “knowing God”
Reading a book by AW Tozer will help that by the way.

It's like what I said in the marriage sermon a few months ago - God's main concern is not our happiness but our holiness. God gives you a spouse that will test you and teach you and if you'll let God teach you and refine you through your spouse instead of getting offended every time they bring something up, now you're letting God make you into the person He wants you to be. He has made HEAVEN perfect and THAT is our destination.

Yes, God will bring out a change of thinking - a healthy mindset

Yes, that will produce good and better choices

Yes, a godly mindset and better choices will produce a happier life overall

Yes, of course. God teaches you not to be so selfish, what happens your relationships last and improve and at the core of long-term relationships is a deep and meaningful and dare I say it, happy life.

BUT, life STILL won't be all “happiness” You STILL will face very difficult things.
In fact, we still face the consequences of our prior sinful life while we're here on earth!
Did Pastor Jordan really just say that?

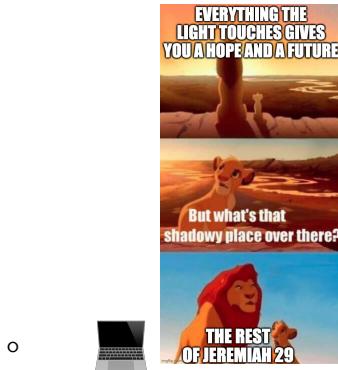
YES. Yes he did.

I've been in ministry long enough to see that while God gives people a HOPE and a JOY in their heart and you can see it in their eyes, they still have some negative results - some consequences of their prior decisions.

 **When we make the mistake of thinking that God or “faith/coming to church” is for the purpose of solving all my problems and riding me of all discomfort, then**

we feel greatly disappointed and disillusioned when we face a tragedy or terrible situation. We feel ... maybe God isn't real. Maybe it didn't work." But that's the trap Satan wants you to enter! Faith in God is primarily about faith in ANOTHER place - a heavenly home where then and THERE all things will be perfect!.

Go to meme...



- **What did the scripture mean then?**
- If we look not too far ahead of this passage of scripture we see the setting for what is taking place when Jeremiah prophesied in chapter 29:

 Jeremiah 27:1-11

At the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: This is what the Lord said to me: “Make chains and yoke bars for yourself and put them on your neck. Send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon through messengers who are coming to King Zedekiah of Judah in Jerusalem.

Command them to go to their masters, saying, ‘This is what the Lord of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Tell this to your masters: “By my great strength and outstretched arm, I made the earth, and the people, and animals on the face of the earth. I give it to anyone I please. So now I have placed all these lands under the authority of my servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

I have even given him the wild animals to serve him. All nations will serve him, his son, and his grandson until the time for his own land comes, and then many nations and great kings will enslave him. “ “ “As for the nation or kingdom that does not serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and does not place its neck under the yoke of the king of

Babylon, that nation I will punish by sword, famine, and plague—this is the Lord’s declaration—until through him I have destroyed it.

So you should not listen to your prophets, diviners, dreamers, fortune-tellers, or sorcerers who say to you, ‘Don’t serve the king of Babylon!’ They are prophesying a lie to you so that you will be removed from your land. I will banish you, and you will perish. But as for the nation that will put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave it in its own land, and that nation will cultivate it and reside in it. This is the Lord’s declaration.” ’ ’

- Just look at the distance these exiles were about to travel into their captivity under Babylon for this period of time. 🖥️




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- The people of Judah were being exiled to Babylon, being stripped of everything they had and were, being placed into a space of humility, for the lifetime of an entire generation (70 years).
- And here Jeremiah is speaking on behalf of the Lord saying that this period of exile is not forever. That there is more he has in store for them if they would just turn back to him!
- In allowing them to be exiled, God had a PURPOSE in the PROBLEM.
- God was separating them from those who had hard hearts towards God.
- God was preparing them for what He had in store for them!
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- JEREMIAH 24:4-7
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- Even though they felt DISSAPOINTED it was God protecting them from false idols and evil ideology.
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- **Sometimes we can't really know God's heart and get truly close to Him without being uprooted in some way.**

Did you lose your job recently? Maybe it's a set up! God is setting you up to teach you something - to refine your heart - to bring you closer to His heart - to depending upon HIM for all things!

Did a dream fall through? Maybe it's a set up! Maybe God is drawing you nearer to Him because maybe the dream became the object of your worship instead of God Himself. In my mentoring of worship leaders and songwriters I often take some time in the studio to teach them - to warn them not to fall into the trap of worshipping "worship" Did you know that a worship leader can worship "worship music" and fall out of love with Jesus? YES. It happens. The nuances are small - but they're there.

When I seek God, He will find me.

- As long as everything goes according to plan I start to forget my need for God.
- Let's take a look at what Jeremiah was speaking leading into verse 11:
-  **Jeremiah 29:4-11 CSB**
 - This is what the Lord of Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles I deported from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. Find wives for yourselves, and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters to men in marriage so that they may bear sons and daughters.
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 - Multiply there; do not decrease. Pursue the well-being of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the Lord on its behalf, for when it thrives, you will thrive." For this is what the Lord of Armies, the God of Israel, says: "Don't let your prophets who are among you and your diviners deceive you, and don't listen to the dreams you elicit from them, for they are prophesying falsely to you in my name. I have not sent them."

We'll come back to the text in a minute but I have to interject something here that I don't want you to miss. **Many Christians have such an "escape theology" that they miss out on what God wants to do through them WHERE THEY ARE!**

“Pursue the well-being of the city I have deported to you to.”

I wonder... is your town better off because you're there?

Many Christians will think “I’m going to send my missions money to Uganda. There they need Jesus.”

The Truth is that there are women at Bella’s Women Center that need you - a mentor and friend - to lead them to follow Jesus together with you.

Many Christians are gathered in churches all over trumbull county today and they might hear a missionary from Sweden and think “One day God might be able to use me. Maybe I’ll go to Europe and be a missionary!”

The truth is that there are kids and teens at TCCS waiting on YOU to be their mentor and love them.


The truth is that there are people in Warren AND Kinsman who can’t pay the bills and can’t afford to put the new door on the house and and can’t fix the roof but YOU are their neighbor!

You live 20 minutes away - some of you 2 minutes away from someone in need and God has placed YOU there to increase their well-being. **Stoping waiting on God to move you and start where you are and bloom where you’re planted! Love and serve the people in front of you!**

And watch God transform your town!

K - back to scripture =)


- This is the Lord’s declaration. For this is what the Lord says: “When seventy years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place. For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.
- We find so many of our faith stories that we celebrate today coming out of this period and the time immediately following it as the people of Judah were leaving exile.
 - The temple was destroyed, it was here in exile that the people of God began to fully grasp that God is not contained to one place, a community, a town, a temple, or a sanctuary.
 - Daniel was put in a place of authority under King Nebuchadnezzar
 - Daniel appointed Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego to a position to manage the province of Babylon.

- These three did not follow the King's decree to worship a gold statue out of obedience to God, were thrown in a furnace as a result, and then delivered from the furnace by God.
- King Nebuchadnezzar's heart turned in this final period of his life.
- These four men displayed what it means to seek the Lord in all things and look what came of it during a season of pain and challenge for them and their people.
 -  What life does to us depends largely on what life finds in us. If we seek the Lord and want His best, then circumstances will build us and prepare us for what He has planned. If we rebel or if we look for quick and easy shortcuts, then circumstances will destroy us and rob us of the future God wants us to enjoy. The same sun that melts the ice also hardens the clay. - Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*Be Decisive*](#) (p. 126). Victor Books.
- What if they would have caved to culture?

One of my favorite sermons I ever wrote was "Finding Courage" about Daniel. If you didn't hear that yet, please go on your podcast app and look for it.


Daniel didn't cave to the mob. These four didn't just "go along to get along" They didn't just want to look ... **THEY VALUED TRUTH AND HONESTY and HOLINESS and PLEASING GOD - the GOD OF THE BIBLE.**


- Don't forget that later Daniel finds himself in a lion's den where God protects him. God will use our most trying times to teach us just how powerful He is!
- What else comes down the road for this group of people? Restoration is found in the rebuilding of the walls in Jerusalem. God uses a cupbearer named Nehemiah and gives him a vision to restore the walls and therefore the kingdom and even levitical worship. God always raises up a man or a woman to lead God's people towards God's vision for their life.
- Jeremiah 29 shows us that God has plans - good plans - great plans - perfect plans - and **seeing it in our lives comes with SEEKING HIM!** Remember ... **When I seek God, He will find me.**
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-  Jeremiah 29:12-14 CSB
You will call to me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. I will be found by you”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and places where I banished you”—this is the Lord’s declaration. “I will restore you to the place from which I deported you.”
- Jeremiah here isn’t just talking about the exile in Babylon, he is prophesying about the day that is yet to come where Israel will be together again in the presence of the Messiah!
 - **When you find yourself in a place of despair, when you feel like you are burning in a fiery furnace, thrown in a den full of lions, when you are placed in a position of uncomfortable compromise...**

// **Keep worshipping!**

- Keep seeking Him. Keep your eyes on Jesus!
- Hebrews. So we with unveiled faces ...
- Keep searching for him with all your heart.
- The Lord is not hiding from you!
 - You might be in a place right now where you believe that God isn’t there for you, that He’s nowhere to be found, but we see what his word says!
 - **Jeremiah 29:12 CSB**
“You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. I will be found by you”

- You're saying, "God where are you?" but my question to you is, "Where are you?"
 - Are we on our faces before him seeking him out?
 - Are our hearts laid out set on seeking him in all we say and do?
- In my moments of disparity, may my sights be set high towards God with an attitude of laying prostrate before my King.
- STORY
- For he has a HOPE for you - a place of restoration for you - when we give him our situations and say, Jesus, I choose to seek you.
 - His plan might not be for you to get all you want, but he knows and sees what you need, even if you don't.
-  Romans 8:18-30 CSB
 - For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience. In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

-  **You know what this perfect plan is?**
 - **Eternity with Jesus.**
- Jesus has a plan for you, a plan to restore you, and, like those exiled in Babylon, it begins when we turn to God with everything we have within us.
 - God said he will not hide from us.
 - He will bring us HOME
 - We read in John 17 where Jesus paints a beautiful picture of His desire to be with us forever. He promises us that He'll send the Holy Spirit to be with us and enable that unity here on earth but I would argue it's even more important to not miss verse
 - In this ONE chapter, Jesus promises us so much; He promises us a hope and a future - but primarily that future is in Heaven with HIM - then and THERE we will have our deepest desires satisfied.

I want to read John 17:13-26 and just comment in a few sections so that you see the connection between old testament Jehovah God and New Testament Jesus. The same Father who sent the prophets to tell people to repent and trust in God is the same God who sent His Son Jesus to teach people what righteousness looks like and what it means to serve God ... AND what it means to TRUST GOD despite going thru pain or trial or unanswered prayers.

John 17:13-26 ***In what's often called Jesus "High Priestly Prayer" He says to His Father, praying out loud ...***

I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Did you know that here and now Jesus has already told us that we will be hated because of our unity with Him?

Did you know that it is no suppose to God that when you stand up for truth you will be hated and called every kind of name?

Revelation tells us that in the end times people will call "good" evil and "evil" good!

It's an upside down world we live in and millions of people are being deceived daily and walking right into Satan's trap. It IS a messed up world but remember what we said earlier - we're called to bring truth to it - not just escape from it.

So Jesus says that in our union with Him we will be hated, then He says...

¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

How can you be sanctified in the truth of God's Word if you're only hearing it or reading it on Sunday mornings? I want to encourage you to read the most powerful, life-changing, encouraging, life-giving book there is EVERY single day! Let it sanctify you - meaning - let it change the way you naturally think - into the way GOD wants you to think. It will wash you clean. The WORD has a purifying purpose - it clean us and teaches us what is actually TRUTH and what is actually GOOD. The world will call it "good" and loving and "affirming" to sin while God's Word will teach you actual truth.

Jesus goes on...

¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

Pause - did you know that some people will believe in Jesus by hearing YOUR words?! WOW! POWERFUL!

Jesus says ...

²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world..."

Did you know that JESUS wants you to BE WITH HIM WHERE HE IS! He can't WAIT to take you home - to His home - to your home! Yes this world has some joy and some beautiful things. Yes, God has made earth a beautiful creation. Yes, your family and friendships can give you real joy and they are blessings from God no doubt. **But this world DOES NOT COMPARE to the glory and wonder of Heaven!**

Jesus acknowledges that living in this world IS very difficult at times but ...

Did you know that God's Word promises you also that Jesus Himself is praying for you! As a High Priest, He prays and intercedes for you - asking the Father to strengthen you on your journey home! Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1 all declare that!

Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 553). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

- Again the sentiment “I tried God. It didn’t work.” Is one said by someone who didn’t understand all that I just taught you. That comes from someone who believed that God is more of a genie in a bottle ready to give out wishes and remove problems when asked. But don’t forget what I shared last month ...

Sin & separation from God often begins with thinking that God has not given you everything you need to be satisfied. 4 of the 10 Commandments had to do with wanting something God has not given you. Satan told Eve “Did God really say...” & told them a lie implying that God was with-holding something good from them - therefore that He wasn’t kind and generous. Did you know man would have lived forever Genesis indicates? Crazy! But everything lost in the Garden is Restored in the New Jerusalem - when Heaven comes down to a new Earth! Rev 22. We defeat Satan and avoid his deceit when we read the Bible and learn more about who GOD is and what His plans are for our lives. And Don’t forget, when the New Jerusalem comes down from Heaven and is established for us to live in with Jesus forever, Satan will be destroyed forever in the Lake of Fire and WE who’ve trusted and followed Jesus will enjoy the presence of Jesus FREE OF PAIN and the problems Satan brings ... forever!

-  1 Peter 1:3-4 CSB

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

// Conclusion

- For the people of Judah, God had plans to bring them back to the place he had prepared for them, not just on earth, but before their messiah.
- He has plans for you, plans for a hope and a future - an eternity with Him - our messiah, our savior!
- **My Hope is Built (Hymn)** - Have the Band Sing or be led by the campus pastor preaching acapella

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly
lean on Jesus’ name.

Refrain:

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

- Salvation Call
- Open Altars of Surrender for Seeking God