

The Light of Hope

Advent Season 1: Jeremiah 29:11.

Context:

Unrepentant people doomed to exile.

Chapter 29 promises are made to one kind of people.

Question: To which one is God speaking the promises to?

1. First Half of the Verse.

- a. I – Subject.
 - i. Government empty promises vs God's fulfilling promises.
- b. Know – Information.
 - i. Socratis moto vs God's Omniscience.
- c. Plan – Vision.
 - i. Tomatoes in the salad.

2. Middle of the Verse.

- a. Voice – God doesn't waste his words.
 - i. The Word became flesh.
 - ii. The concept vs the plan.

3. Last Half of the Verse.

- a. "Prosper, not harm" – Good plan, good intent.
 - i. Secular movies vs Christian movies.
- b. "Hope and future" – Good assurance.
 - i. Karate Kid movie.

Conclusion.

- a. Answering the question made in the introduction.
- b. Application 1 – Be careful with the empty religious life.
- c. Application 2 – Christmas hope. "From doom people into saved people."

"Today we can say: God does not dwell in Temples made by human hands, God dwells in your heart."

"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."

(Jeremiah 29:11)

As we light the candle of hope in this Advent season, as we prepare our hearts for **Christmas Day** and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus, this verse is simple and short – but it gives us hope.

The prophet Jeremiah had a difficult ministry; he was speaking God's word to people who were **unrepentant**. Moreover, he was the one who had to prophesy the fall of Jerusalem. God's people were doomed to exile!

When God said, *"I know the plans I have for you,"* there was a historical, geographical, and spiritual context:

- Part of the nation had been sent into exile – they were far from the holy land, the holy temple, the worship, and the service days.
- The other part of the nation resisted and stayed in the holy land, with the temple, worship, and the service.

Question: To which one of the groups did God say these words?

1. First Half of the Verse.

a. "I" – The Subject.

All of us get sick and tired of empty promises. Think of politicians, and you will be discouraged by their empty promises. No matter how good the promise is, it doesn't bring hope because of the ones making the promise.

The one who makes the promise is the Lord, the Bread of Life, the Great I AM, the Lord of Hosts.

Application: When you combine these three characteristics of God, that gives you hope. The one who speaks has power to act.

b. "Know" – Information.

Socrates, the Greek philosopher, was so wise – and yet his famous line was: *"I know that I know nothing."* God, on the other hand, knows everything – He is omniscient.

What kind of knowledge is that? Is it just information? Is it just an opinion? Is it just an observation? No! It is empirical, fruitful, real, tested, and approved. *"It is hard to argue against the facts"* – that's the kind of knowledge God has.

In such a chaotic scenario, when people don't know much, He does.

Application: When you combine God's identity with His capability – His knowledge – that gives you hope.

c. "Plan" – Vision.

You have probably heard the saying: knowledge is different from wisdom. "Tomato is a fruit, but I eat it with the vegetables – not in a delicious fruit salad, because that tastes awful."

God has authority. God has knowledge. God is also wise – He has a plan!

Application: When you know who He is, how much He knows, and that He has a plan for you – that gives you hope.

(By the way, do you realize God doesn't share much about the plan? That's because He just wants you to trust Him.)

Illustration: The idea of the light is not the full light; it is just a token that gives you hope.

2. The Middle of the Verse.

a. "Says the Lord" – Voice.

Very straightforward: God doesn't throw His words into the air. When He speaks, He means it; when He promises, He fulfills it. "God's promises and reality are the very same thing!" – Amen!

God means His word so much that "The Word became flesh and walked among us." (John 1:14)

Illustration: Some people talk about concepts and ideas – but they don't know how to get there. Some people talk about plans – they know step-by-step what to do, but they need someone to cast the vision. God does both!

Application: That gives you hope.

3. Last Half of the Verse.

a. "Prosper, not harm" – good intent.

Think about the word "good," it can be understood in a few different ways:

- The secular movie industry produces good movies – but their content is not good. Therefore, though it is good, it lacks good intent.
- The gospel movie industry produces movies with good intent – but for lack of funds and public interest, the quality may not be ideal. Therefore, though it has good intent, it lacks good quality.

Application: God has a plan to prosper – good quality. God has a plan not to harm – good intent.

b. “Hope and future” – good assurance.

Still speaking about movies...

I believe you know about *The Karate Kid*: the story of a kid (Daniel LaRusso) who used to get beaten by other boys in school. He takes karate classes with an elderly sensei (Mr. Miyagi), and once he is ready, he challenges the other kids in a karate tournament. And as you know with the movie – the same story every time (but you love it, ha-ha) – the good guy always gets beaten until hope is gone. Only then does he make a comeback move and win the fight!

How can you be sure that God’s plans for you will never fail? That He can give you hope and a future?

Because He is the Great I AM, and because He is all-knowing. God has already been to the future, and He knows your future is good because of Him.

Application: That gives you hope.

Conclusion.

This is the first Sunday of Advent, and we begin it with hope.

As I mentioned in the introduction, there were two kinds of people in Israel when the prophet Jeremiah spoke these words: the ones in Israel, with the Temple, with the worship, with the Sabbaths; and the ones who were exiled, far from all the worship services.

These promises of hope were given to the people who were far from the Temple – not near the Temple and the worship services. That’s mind-blowing.

The apex of this chapter in Jeremiah 29 is found in the following verses: *“You will seek me, and you will find me (not in the temple, not in Israel, not in the Sabbaths) when you seek me with all your heart; I will be found by you... says the Lord.”*

I conclude with two applications – one about what you should do, the other about what God does:

1. App1: We should not live a merely religious Christian life. The people who had remained in the land had every reason to worship God; yet they were the ones who didn't receive the promise. The ones who were far from God (in Babylon!) did.
2. App2: It is similar to the Christmas season: from doomed people to saved people. The hope of Christmas rests in God Himself, who became flesh and walked among us. Even though the world is far from God, He came so that you and I could seek Him, be found by Him, and be saved by Him.

Nowadays we can say: God does not dwell in Temple's made by human hands, God dwells in your heart.