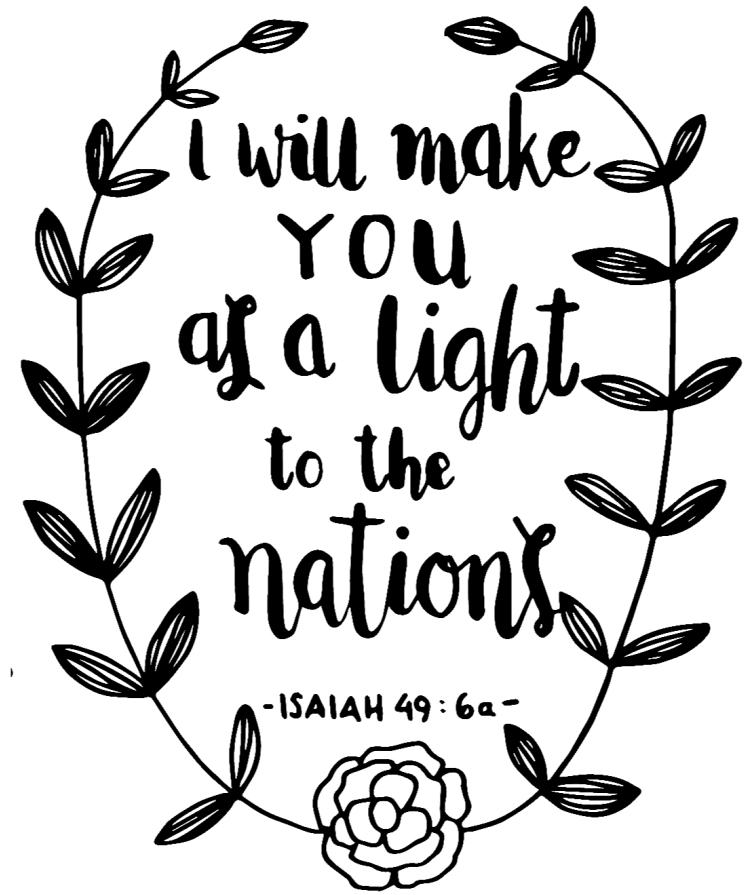


Questions for Reflection

1. How does it help to think of this chapter of life as one in “exile”?
2. What are natural concerns of raising a family in our current cultural climate? Discuss ways you do this. How have you seen this done well? Not so well?
3. How do you determine what parts of culture to accept, what parts to reject, and what parts to accept with modification?



Thriving in Babylon

February 9, 2020 | Jeremiah 29:1-14 | Pastor Roger Williams

We are obligated, then, to seek the welfare of our cultural setting, involving ourselves in the various cultural and social institutions of our place as we participate in the cultural task. This means that the churches' witness will move beyond the church as a communal gathering. [As Newbiggin argues,] the church must witness to the Lordship of Christ whether its members are scattered or together: "The Church exists in its prime reality from Monday to Saturday, in all its members, dispersed throughout the fields and homes and offices and factories, bearing the royal priesthood of Christ in every corner of his world. On the Lord's Day it is withdrawn into itself to renew its being in the lord Himself."

-Michael Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 185.

Jeremiah 29:1-14

¹These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon... It said:

⁴“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

⁸For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, ⁹for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD.

¹⁰“For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹For 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. ¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

John 17 ¹³But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴I 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. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

As those who have a secure future with a present Lord, we are called to live in the city, as a city, for the city.

We have a secure future with a present Lord ^(v.10-14)

I know the plans I have for you...

Such teaching, conveyed by Jeremiah's letter, turned victims into visionaries.
-Chris Wright, *Mission of God*, 100.

In the city with an embodied presence ^(v.5)

build, live, plant, eat

Israel is to be a display people, a showcase to the word of how being in covenant with Yahweh can change a people.”
- John Durham, *Exodus*, 263.

As a city nourished by an alternate story ^(v.6)

take, have, give, bear, multiply

If the church is to be a “come and join us” people who embody the coming kingdom of God in the midst of the world, of necessity their lives must exhibit a redemptive tension with and a challenge to the idolatrous cultures of the world, including Western culture...The early Christians understood themselves to be different from others in their culture, and lived together as an alternative community nourished by an alternative story.

-Michael Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 6-7

For the city with hopeful realism ^(v.7)

seek, pray

As they struggle to be faithful at the crossroads between the biblical story and the immensely powerful story of empire, committed to the Lord yet serving the welfare of the arrogant world kingdom, their lives consist of “endless negotiation” of when to acquiesce and when to resist. How does one remain faithful in the midst of a pagan world?

-Michael Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 65.