

Sermon: Planting Gardens in Exile.
Series: *Gathering and Scattering*

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:4-14.
Date: June 16, 2024

OBSERVATION -- As a group, talk through and summarize the passage. Think through *Who, What, Where, When, How, Why* questions together.

INTERPRETATION -- Answer these questions together:

1. What does this passage teach us about us?

- a) Read 1 Peter 1:1 and 5:13. What makes it difficult or easy for you to think of this world (your country, city, workplace, school, etc.) as Babylon?
- b) Assimilation and Isolation are two extreme reactions to exile that many Christians embrace. Assimilation = using the culture for your gain. Isolation = avoiding all cultural influence. Do you tend to lean toward one of these reactions? What is the danger in each of these extremes?

2. What does this passage teach us about God?

- a) Read Genesis 1:28-31. How is God's language in Jeremiah 29:4-7 similar to this? What does this tell us about God's desire for the world? How might the church make their part of the world a bit more like the Garden of Eden?

3. What does this passage teach us about grace/salvation? How does it point to Christ?

- a) Read Jeremiah 29:12-14. How do these verses apply uniquely to Jesus and his passion (cross and resurrection)? In what way does Jesus' fulfillment of these verses mean that we too will one day seek the Lord with all our hearts?
- b) The exiles in Babylon had to trust in a future hope in order to survive. How might your perspective on life (your work, marriage, success, ministry) change if you could see it from the future hope of Christ's return (all good restored, all evil punished, dwelling with God)?

APPLICATION

- a) Assimilation asks what can I get out of this culture? Isolation asks, how can I avoid this culture. The Gospel asks: What can I share with the culture that will allow it to flourish as God wants it to? How would you answer this question?
- b) We said that we, the church, are meant to plant gardens while in exile. From 1 Peter we learned that we can plant 1) Good deeds (2:12), 2) Respect for authority (2:13), 3) Hospitality (4:9), and 4) A story of hope that provokes questions (3:15). Which of these stands out to you as a starting point or even a long-term goal for your new "garden planting" project?

PRAYER

- Thank God for being with you in your exile.
- Confess ways that you have fallen into either assimilation or isolation.
- Thank Jesus for being the one who sought the Lord with his whole heart so that we too could seek the Lord whole-heartedly.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to plant a garden of hope within your culture.