

FBC Service Sunday January 11, 2026, When the Calendar Turns, God's Promise Stands

When the Calendar Turns

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." **Jeremiah 29:11** (NKJV)

When life feels uncertain and culture is shifting beneath our feet, God's promise remains steady, His purposes are sure, and His people are never forgotten.

As we step into 2026, we do so in a world that feels faster, **louder, and more uncertain than ever.**

Technology appears to be changing overnight. We're witnessing social values shift beneath our feet. Headlines remind us daily of conflict, division, and instability.

Many people enter a new year not with excitement, but with uncertainty.

Into that moment, God speaks a word that has comforted believers for generations:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you..."

This verse is often quoted on greeting cards, graduation plaques, and coffee mugs. We share them with those who are sick, discouraged or in some sort of difficult situation. It's on our church directory.

And rightfully so because it makes a wonderful promise that believers have claimed for hundreds of years. It has been a lifeline, especially for believers going through hard times.

We will never properly understand this verse though unless we know something about its background. The single most important fact is that it was written to Jewish exiles in Babylon who had been forcibly removed from Jerusalem by king Nebuchadnezzar.

Having been uprooted from all they held dear, they now live hundreds of miles away from home, in the very heart of pagan idol worship. All their dreams and hopes had been smashed. **Deep inside they questioned, "How could our God have let this happen?"**

If we're truly God's people, how did we end up here?" **And they wondered if God had forgotten them.**

In all their confusion and despair, they made two very human mistakes.

They thought they would never end up in Babylon. That led them to false confidence.

Then they thought they would never get out of Babylon. That led them to despair.

These are the two spiritual dangers of every generation.

We face the same danger when we

- 1) Expect what God has never promised, or
- 2) Refuse to believe what He has promised.

Years ago we sang a little chorus, “**Every promise in the Book is mine, every chapter every verse every line.**” To which I answer a resounding **yes**, but not every promise means what we think it means. Our danger with Jeremiah 29:11 is that we often quote it without considering its context.

Jeremiah 29:11 is not shallow optimism; **it’s deep-rooted hope, a message of enormous hope.**

As we think about this beloved verse, keep two things in mind:

God will not always do what we expect Him to do,

But He will always do what He says He will do.

On this second Sunday of 2026, we will look at:

The context of this promise

The character of the God who makes the promise

The meaning of “peace,” “future,” and “hope”

What this promise means for believers in a rapidly changing world

And how we are called to live in light of this promise

The Context: A Promise Spoken in Exile

To understand the power of this promise for us today, we need to remember who first heard it. Jeremiah didn't write these words to a people living in prosperity and ease. **He wrote them to Jewish exiles in Babylon.**

They were displaced. Their culture had been stripped away. They were surrounded by a society that did not share their values, their faith, or their language. They were far from home, stripped of comfort, stability, and identity. Jerusalem had fallen. The temple lay in ruins. Their future looked bleak.

They were asking the same questions we ask today:

Where is God in all of this? Has everything fallen apart? Is there still hope for us?

And into that painful reality, God spoke:

“I know the thoughts that I think toward you.”

Notice something crucial: God does not deny their hardship. He does not promise immediate escape. In fact, earlier in the chapter He tells them they will remain in exile for seventy years. This is not a quick fix.

Yet He promises them that exile is not the end of the story.

The false prophets of that day were busy telling the people what they wanted to hear:

"Don't worry, this will all be over in a few months! Things will go back to the way they were!"

But God, through Jeremiah, said something radical: "Settle in. Build houses. Plant gardens. Multiply. Seek the peace of the city where I have sent you." **And then He gives them verse 11.**

This is an important word for modern believers. Faith does not exempt us from hardship.

Trusting God does not mean life will be easy. But it does mean our suffering is never meaningless, and our future is never abandoned.

"For I Know" Three of the Most Comforting Words in Scripture

The verse begins with three of the most comforting words in Scripture: "For I know..."

In our modern age, many are obsessed with **"knowing."** We have all kinds of data, algorithms and predictive AI that try to tell us what the economy will do or what the next trend will be.

Every day now it seems we talk about a world that moves at the speed of a fibre-optic cable, a society where the only constant is the dizzying pace of change.

But when as believers we turn to an ancient word that is just as relevant now as when it was first penned, we find the powerful comforting words of Jeremiah 29:11:

"For I know the thoughts or plans that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

God Sovereign In a world that feels increasingly unpredictable, this verse isn't just a "coffee mug" sentiment. It's a lifeline. **It's a declaration of divine sovereignty over our 2026 reality.**

God's knowledge is settled. When He says, "I know the thoughts I have for you," He is speaking as **the Architect who has already seen the finished building.**

For the believer in 2026, this means you don't have to have it all figured out. You don't need to predict the next five years of global change to be safe.

Your security does not rest in your ability to navigate the culture; **it rests in the fact that the One who created time is already standing in your tomorrow.**

He is not surprised by 2026. He is not caught off guard by the challenges you face. **He says, "I know."**

Our God does not predict the future. He authors it.

I'm Thinking About You All the Time. Verse 11

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you." God thinks about us!

That may be the most important statement you'll ever hear.

The God of the universe thinks about us. He considers us, He knows us, He remembers us, He keeps us in mind. He knows who we are and where we are 24/7.

Not for one second are we ever lost or forgotten, for His heart is so big and His knowledge so vast that no one ever gets lost in the shuffle.

We don't always think about each other. We sometimes forget the people closest to us. I have to confess I sometimes forget birthdays, anniversaries and graduations.

The truth is, most of us are better at remembering bad things. We can recall the hard times and the harsh words spoken against us.

I've met a few people who seem to have a humungous Grievance Meter ticking away that remembers every mean thing that anyone ever did to them—even things that happened twenty or thirty years ago.

Some people have memories like an elephant. An elephant never forgets they say, but some people remember every rotten thing that ever happened to them, and they nurse their grudges for years.

God does not remember us the way we remember pain—**He remembers us with covenant love.**

God Never Forgets His Children

Even when we do have good thoughts about each other, we tend to forget after a while. That's why we say "out of sight, out of mind." But God never forgets His children. Even though He has the whole world to rule, **He never forgets His own.** **(God is still on the throne and He will remember His own.)**

He is not just saying, "I've got plans for you," He's really saying, *"I've been thinking about you."*

Remember—they heard this in Babylon, far from home, carried away against their will, only able to do what the Babylonian king permitted them to do.

God has just said, "You'll be returning home but not for 70 years" (v. 10), which was good news and bad news, **good** because it meant they wouldn't be in Babylon forever, **but bad** because 70 years is a long time to be in exile.

And God says, "You think I've forgotten about you. You know that you're here because you forgot me, But you're forever in my thoughts. You're still my people. **I have not forgotten you."**

The Lord knows what He's thinking even when we don't. Have you ever said, "Lord, what are you doing? Why is this happening?" Why don't I understand?

He has us constantly on His mind. This much is clear. God is thinking about us—always.

The Character of the Promise Maker

The strength of this promise does not rest in the people receiving it—but in the God who speaks it.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD."

God's plans are not guesses. They are not reactionary.

They are not shaped by panic or fear. He does not wake up uncertain about what comes next.

In a world obsessed with forecasting—economic predictions, political analysis, trend projections—**this verse reminds us that God alone sees the full picture.**

This is deeply reassuring for believers living in a world of constant change. **Our God is not scrambling to keep up with trends.** He's not surprised by technology, global shifts, or moral confusion. **He remains sovereign, steady, and purposeful.**

Thoughts of Peace, Not of Evil

God says His thoughts toward His people are *"thoughts of peace and not of evil."*

It's not enough to know that He's thinking of us. **We need to know what He's thinking.** In this case He makes it clear. *"Thoughts of peace, and not of evil."*

The word used here is one we've heard often. **SHALOM.**

SHALOM MEANS:

Peace with God

Peace within ourselves

Peace in our relationships

Peace even in difficult circumstances

This matters deeply in a modern society marked by anxiety and mental health struggles.

God does not promise a stress-free life—but He promises His peace within it.

Jesus later echoes this same truth: **John 14:27**

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you."

His peace is not fragile. **It's not dependent on circumstances.** It is rooted in His presence.

Some translations render this text differently though I liked the NKJV.

"Plans for welfare and not for evil" (ESV).

"Plans to take care of you, not abandon you" (MSG).

"Plans for good and not for disaster" (NLT).

"Plans for well-being and not for trouble" (NLV).

This answers our greatest question. Is God for us or against us?

All His plans move toward one expected end. Nothing happens by chance or for no purpose at all.

We will never properly understand Jeremiah 29:11 if we think it's a kind of divine rabbit's foot to protect us from pain or to keep us from suffering.

Remember that this verse was given to the Jews to give them hope that they were not forgotten and that their exile would not last forever. **It is not a "Get Out of Babylon Free" card.**

This verse would provide great encouragement to the Jews ...

"I sent you to Babylon."

"I am thinking about you while you are in Babylon."

"I have not forgotten you in Babylon."

"I am with you in Babylon." "I will give you a future in Babylon."

"I will bring you home from Babylon."

God Intends to Give Us a Future Filled with Hope.

"To give you a future and a hope."

God promises a future—not just survival, but purpose.

Scripture reminds us that the future belongs to God before it belongs to us.

He is still writing our story. Quote *"He who has begun a good work in you will carry it on to completion."* Philippians 1:6

For Christians, this means we don't anchor our hope in trends, governments, or systems. **We anchor it in the unchanging faithfulness of God.**

Hope in Scripture is not wishful thinking. It is confident expectation rooted in God's promises.

Biblical Hope Says – Confident Expectation

God Has Not Forgotten Me. God is not finished with me yet. God's purposes will prevail

This kind of hope is desperately needed today. Christian hope stands firm because it is anchored in God's character, not circumstances.

The Apostle Paul captures this beautifully:

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." (Romans 15:13)

Hope shapes how we live. It gives us courage to face uncertainty, patience in suffering, and confidence in God's faithfulness.

What This Promise Means for Believers in a Fast-Changing World

So what does Jeremiah 29:11 mean for us as we enter 2026?

First, it means we don't have to fear change.

God remains constant even when the world does not.

Second, it means we're called to trust God's timing.

The people in exile had to wait—but they waited with hope.

Third, it means we're invited to live faithfully where we are.

In Jeremiah 29, God tells the people to build houses, plant gardens, raise families, and seek the welfare of the city—even in exile.

That is a powerful word for the church today.

We're not called to withdraw from the world in fear, nor to blend in without conviction.

We're called to live faithfully and courageously—right where God has placed us. **To bloom where we're planted.** To exhibit a holy boldness. To let folks know whose we are and whom we serve.

Be ready always to give an answer to anyone that asks us a reason of the hope that is in us. **1 Peter 3:15**

As We Begin a New Year, This Promise Calls Us to Several Responses:

Trust God more deeply

Release anxiety about the unknown

Seek God's peace daily

Walk faithfully even when the path is unclear

Hope boldly in God's future

A Future and a Hope

We may not know what 2026 will hold—but we know Who holds 2026.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you... thoughts of peace... to give you a future and a hope."

May this promise steady our hearts, guide our steps, and shape our witness in a world longing for hope

Jeremiah 29:11

This promise is for you. Thanks be to God. Amen.