

First United Methodist Church

310 North Rowley, Mitchell, SD 57301

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“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

This is a great passage from the Old Testament. I’ve used it in various situations. I’ve even quoted it a time or two, even to my children to let them know that God is involved with their lives. It’s even a verse that I’ve had to remind myself of and to realize that God is at work in my life too...even in those moments when I’m wondering if God is there!!

What I find interesting is that there have been a few times I’ve heard the passage quoted or used and basically the “speaker” is making the point that since the verse says God has a plan “not for harm,” that that means a person won’t have any difficulties in their life.

Just recently in my personal Bible reading time I came across this verse and what struck me is the broader story that this verse is a part of. Jeremiah, the prophet, was not a real “warm fuzzy” guy. At least not to the people of Israel that he was speaking to. Because basically his message was, “You’ve turned away from and stopped following God. Because of that, there will be consequences...” Part of the consequences Jeremiah was speaking of was that the nation would be conquered and the people would be carried off into exile. And that is exactly what happened. Yet, part of God’s message through Jeremiah was that God has not forgotten the people and that still has a plan for them, a future...a future with hope.

So, what this broader story tells me is that God’s “plan” doesn’t mean there will never be struggles and difficulties in life. Some of the greatest learnings of my life have come through some of the most difficult moments. But what Jeremiah wants the people he’s speaking to, to understand is that God’s overall purpose is to build us up, help us to become the people and servants that God desires us to be. God’s plan is not for our harm but for our blessing. This is ultimately what God shared with Abraham, that God was going to bless Abraham but the blessing was given in order for Abraham to bless others.

I still hang on to Jeremiah 29:11. These are great and powerful words. God’s intention and desire for each of us, I believe, is to encourage, build up, and bless us...so that we can be a blessing to others. Are you experiencing some difficulties in life right now? Know that God is not seeking to harm you. God’s desire is to build you up, for you to have a hope-filled future, and for you to be a blessing to others.

Serving Together,

Pastor Keith

This Sunday is going to be a great day at Downtown Mitchell First UMC. The **God’s Light Youth Choir** from First UMC of Smyrna, Georgia will be with us and share their gift of music during worship. Worship on Sunday is at 9:30 am. Come join us and bring a friend or two. Communion will also be served as a part of worship. 310 N. Rowley is our physical address.