

March 3, 2019

“A Theology of Moving”
Jeremiah 29:1-9

FCF: Tension between stability and mobility

PROPOSITION: (anchor) The Lord knows well our struggle with moving.
(magnet) We need to hear and heed what He has to say.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Network TV is going through a transformation - both in terms of the number of networks and the types of shows they offer. Case in point, HGTV. HGTV is the fourth most watched cable network in the United States. It has a range of shows. Some focus on buying, some on selling, some on remodeling, others on a combination. Each has different hosts, locations, and audiences. But the thing they all have in common is the theme of making a place into a home.

Why is this so appealing? It’s tapping into something deep within us all. We were made for home. But we live in a transient world. We are caught between stability and mobility.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Jeremiah 29:1-9](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Let me paint a composite picture of Ward and June from Anytown, USA. They moved to Clarksville a few months ago. But they’re having trouble settling in. June can’t stop thinking of and talking about Anytown. Ward wonders about raising a family here. He says he can’t find anything to do. And neither of them has made any friends. Oh, for Anytown! Oh, for home!

I get that. We moved here over 16 years ago. Without any hesitation, I would say we were warmly welcomed. But that doesn’t mean it was always easy. Moving means new people, places, sights, sounds, smells, landscape, and weather. Not that there’s anything wrong with any of that. There’s much beauty in it all. But when you move, everything is new and unfamiliar.

Here’s the thing. Many of us have moved. Many of us will move again. So here’s the question. Does the Bible have anything to say about such an ordinary thing? Yes, it does. The Lord knows well our struggle with moving. And we need to hear and heed what He has to say.

What does He say? He gives a grid for us to see. First, our longing for home. Second, our loving a place. Third, our leaving it all. Those three things - longing, loving, and leaving.

I. LONGING FOR HOME

So, first, our longing for home. Here we need to begin at the beginning, in Genesis.

A) Deep Design

This longing stems from our deep design. There’s nothing accidental about this.

1. Made for home

We were made for home, for the Garden. We are all hard-wired for place and permanence.

2. Search for home

So we search. It’s why we speak of homecomings. And why homelessness is so very wrong.

B) Reality of Exile

Which brings us to the reality of exile, of being thrust out and barred from returning.

1. Eden

In Eden came the curse. This was a historical event with real effect. And the first was a move.

2. Babylon

And Jeremiah 29 is tied to that. In 597 B.C., the Babylonian army took over Jerusalem and took thousands of people hundreds of miles away. Three years later, Jeremiah was writing to them. That experience of exile was an expression of this deeper exile, this central core estrangement.

We were made for roots. Yet we are restless wanderers. So we long for home.

Application:

This is why we long for home and why it hurts. Milton could have had this in *Paradise Lost* - a section in hell where souls are always moving. And just after the last picture is hung, a demon shouts, "All right, pack it up." Moving may be normal. But it is not natural. It isn't.

Knowing that can help. At least now we know why we feel the way we do. Again, the Lord knows well our struggle with moving. We need to hear and heed what He has to say.

II. LOVING A PLACE

Which brings us to this - loving a place. Back to the letter ([READ Jeremiah 29:5-7](#)).

A) Multiply There

There are two basic ideas here - the call to multiply and to seek the welfare of the place.

1. Sink roots

Sink roots. Build houses, plant gardens, take wives. For places, customs, and people matter.

2. Don't resist

Multiply. Don't decrease, resist, or hold back. Know who moved you. Who is behind all this? ([READ Jeremiah 29:1](#)). But now this ([READ Jeremiah 29:4, 7a](#)). The Lord is behind the move.

B) Seek Its Welfare

Which then leads to a call to seek the welfare of the place ([READ Jeremiah 29:7](#)).

1. The shalom

Seek the welfare, pursue its peace - its shalom, its well-being, its wholeness and flourishing.

2. The Lord's desire

This is now your home. And the Lord has placed you there. This is His desire for you and them. So pray for that place. Not just "pray in Babylon" but "pray for Babylon." Seek its welfare.

For now at least, this is your home. So love that place. Love that place. It is your home.

Application:

This was the call to exiles in Babylon. And it is the call to disciples of Jesus. Unpack the boxes and settle in. Explore and embrace the customs. Eat and delight in the food. Learn about the community and frequent the shops. Do not hold back. Seek its welfare and make a home.

The Lord knows well our struggle in this. We need to hear and heed what He has to say.

III. LEAVING IT ALL

But there's one more thing to be said in terms of moving. And that is leaving it all. As disciples of Jesus, made for place but on the move, who are we? How do we see ourselves?

A) *Agents of the King*

First, we are agents of the King. Wherever we go, we are His emissaries.

1. He came

The Incarnation is our model - the ultimate cross-cultural move, Jesus' becoming one with us.

2. He sends

For He came. And He sends ([READ John 20:21](#)). This is well worth our considering.

B) *Aliens in the Land*

We are agents of the King. But also aliens in the land. We are emissaries and exiles.

1. Definition

We have been barred, banished, and expelled from our native country. We are non-natives.

2. Implications

That gives insight into our identity. And it gives clarity into our agenda. As agents and aliens, we are not to assimilate and blend in. We are to stand out as salt and light, a city on a hill.

Here's the tension. Even as we make our home here, we are to be leaving it all behind.

Application:

So wherever you are, make your home there. But do not allow yourself to be at home. Keep in mind your agenda and identity. We are pilgrims - agents and aliens, exiles and strangers.

Practically, what can that mean? Living in this tension means not adopting the standards or ethics of the place. But embracing its people. And opening our doors. Too often we see our homes as but castles. We need to lower the door over the moat and welcome one another inside.

The Lord knows well our struggle in this. We need to hear and heed what He has to say.

CONCLUSION:

This is what the ancient wisdom of the Bible offers to us. And it is a great gift to modern mobile people. Consider how we usually go about things. As the self-willed and self-directed folks we tend to be, we take a bit from here and grab a bit from there. If we are unsure, we might pool our ignorance and preferences with one another. And from that, we piece and sew a patchwork together that we hope will hold. But inevitably, it fails us. Why? The seams can't take the strain, the fabric can't handle the weight. So we end up with handfuls of tattered rags.

Contrast that sad and common experience to the ancient paths. Or thinking of seams, the fabric lasts, it fits, because what the Lord offers is true to what is. My friends, we need this wisdom from the One who made us, from the One who has spoken and revealed Himself to us. If we're going to flourish and thrive, we need to hear and heed what He has to say - even on this matter of moving. And in that, we see the reality of longing and the need for loving and leaving.

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