

**“Future Plans”**  
**by Rev. John C. Tittle**

**Scripture: Jeremiah 29: 4-14 NRSV**

<sup>4</sup> Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup> Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup> Take 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. <sup>7</sup> But 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. <sup>8</sup> For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, <sup>9</sup> for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord. <sup>10</sup> For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. <sup>13</sup> When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, <sup>14</sup> I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Are you a good letter writer? Can you think of any letters that you are due to write? Is letter writing a dying art in our technological world? What have we lost?
2. What impact do you think Jeremiah's letter had on the Jewish exiles in Babylon? Jeremiah was the only prophet saying that the exile was going to be a long time—70 years. How old will you be in 70 years?
3. Was Jeremiah caving in and encouraging the people to give up their hopes by making a life for themselves in their Babylonian exile?
4. Jeremiah was asking his Jewish people to pray for their captors and pray for the city they were imprisoned in. What do you think some of the reactions were to this encouragement?
5. How might Jeremiah's words give his exiled people a new hope? How might this be a healthy response to a difficult situation?
6. Jeremiah 29:11 is an oft quoted verse: *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.* Why is it so popular?
7. What do we do with this verse when we do experience harm or bad things in our lives? Has God broken his promises?
8. How might having a long-view “binocular vision” of God's two-fold plans for us help us (i.e. present plans & future plans)?