

Jeremiah 29:11
The LORD Knows the Plan

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to give you peace, not disaster, plans to give you hope and a future.

Do you remember the simplicity and joy, often in childhood, of just trusting someone else who's taking care of everything? As I pondered that in my life I thought back to our annual summer vacations in South Haven. My grandpa, who died before I was born, had been the pastor there and as I was growing up my grandma still lived there. Every summer we'd go for a week or so. Mornings with grandma's fresh blueberry muffins. Days spent on the beach. Very fond memories. But as a kid, that 4 hour drive from Milwaukee wasn't any fun. No tablets. No personal music devices. Pretty rough stuff. But then my parents bought a vehicle which I'm sure is completely illegal today. It was a 10 passenger van. Two front seats. A middle row. Then what amounted to a corner booth at a restaurant in the back. Did you ever ride in one of these? It has a circular seat around a table on a post. Now, this was not only great for playing games while driving, but it also converted into a sleeping area. The table would drop down and fill that middle space. A cushion would cover it. And the whole back was a flat surface. So what my dad started doing, is we'd leave for our trip at like 4 am. I'd go sleep in my bed. Then have just the vaguest recollection of my dad picking me up and moving me out into the van. Then I'd wake up in the morning and we'd be in South Haven.

Let me tell you, as a kid, that was awesome! It was as if the whole 4 hour car drive had simply disappeared out of the equation. All I had to do was go to sleep and wake up ready for vacation. My dad did everything. And you know what? I was completely fine with that. I didn't spend a single second wondering if he knew where he was going or if he was going to take the right route. I didn't waste any energy questioning when we were leaving or who was driving. My dad just took care of it. He knew what we were doing and I was perfectly fine with that.

Do you remember the simplicity of just being able to trust someone else who's taking care of everything?

Well, maybe you don't have to try and remember because the more I thought about it, the more I realized each of us is constantly doing this...and it's a great thing.

Did any of you worry about worship tonight? Were any of you sitting at home worrying that I wasn't going to be prepared? Did any of you stress about whether the projection was going to work or be accurate...the service folders printed...the music played properly? No. You showed up and just trusted that those things would be done. I had to spend time thinking about those things. A few others had to prepare. But you just trusted those things would happen.

When I go to the grocery store, I typically don't spend any time worrying about supply chains or whether the shelves will be stocked. I just go, and it's usually there. More on that in a second.

There is this great comfort and simplicity to letting the parts of our lives we're not responsible for just be taken care of by those who are responsible and trusting what they do.

As we face a new year, our verse from Jeremiah reminds us of that very truth. The LORD knows the plan. Let that be enough.

What can we say about 2020? Never in my lifetime (except for maybe the year 2000 for different reason entirely)...never has a New Year's Day been so eagerly anticipated. I think the calls for 2020 to hurry up and be over with started already back in what, May? April? It's been a year, hasn't it?

Of course with all the eager anticipation of leaving 2020 behind, we should note that turning a page on a calendar and changing a 0 to a 1 doesn't guarantee that anything is going to be different. There are plenty of reasons for optimism...and plenty of reasons to be cautious. We just don't know.

But that's the point, isn't it? We don't know...but the LORD knows

You know, things weren't great for the recipients of Jeremiah's words either. This verse was spoken at a time when God's people were in a situation that was anything but great. It was written to those in exile at the hands of Babylon. They had lost their home country...exiled a thousand miles away. They had lost their community...taken into a cultural melting pot. They had lost their religion...banished from the one place where God told them they could worship.

And nothing in these words promised an immediate fix to any of those problems. In fact, right before this verse, the Lord advised his people to settle down in this foreign land because they were going to be there for a while...70 years to be exact. That meant many who were taken wouldn't live to see the end of that time. Some would be born and die before it came to pass. This was no pie in the sky, everything-will-be-better-tomorrow promise. But the comfort was in the fact that the LORD knew the plan...and that was to be enough. His plans were so different that no one could have predicted them...but the comfort he offered was that HE knew them, and that was to be enough!

As we approach a new year, the LORD knows – can we let that be enough? Can we quiet our own fretful heart and rest calmly and contently in that truth?

Because the problems come when we stop calmly trusting what we once did. Every one remembers the run on toilet paper, right? Something we never gave a second thought to...the supply chain in our stores...suddenly was questioned and people began to worry...and that led to fear and doubt. And pretty soon people were convinced they needed 100 rolls of toilet paper...which then started to create actual problems.

Of course, supply chains can fail and so I suppose one could make an argument that those reactions were justified at least on some level.

But the Lord never fails. So reactions like that when it comes to unknown that lies ahead are NEVER justified.

The Lord says, relax, I know...but we start to fret. Worry leads to fear, fear to doubt. And then what happens? Maybe a couple different things. Maybe we start thinking that we have to have all the answers and solutions. So we turn very self-centered in our thinking and living. It's all about conserving what we have for ourselves. Or maybe we start doubting that the LORD has the answers. Our trust in him is shaken. We start thinking he can't be relied upon as we once thought. Or maybe we say, yeah that LORD's in control, but we start worrying that whatever answer he gives is going to be one we can't tolerate. And we're consumed by that fear. Those are sinful problems created when we stop calmly trusting the one in charge.

In the face of that fear and worry and doubt, the LORD offers us the same comfort he gave the people at the time of Jeremiah. HE knows the plan. Can we trust that?

Well, look at how things went for the people of Jeremiah's time. The LORD was going to give them peace, hope and a future. But it didn't happen the way any of them anticipated. 11 years after these words, the temple was gone and the city was in ruins. 70 years later they were freed from captivity but just a small fraction of the Jews cared to return home. 90 years later that small group was living among hostile neighbors who had done everything in their power to give them trouble and prevent any sort of meaningful rebuilding of what once was. But his plans were so different that no one could have predicted them

The LORD's plans...which would bring them peace, hope, and a future in ways they couldn't imagine... was not to raise them back up to prominence, but to prepare the world so that he might lower himself down into it and walk among them. This was the plan. A plan that would bring them ultimate peace...an eternally secure future... and unshakeable hope. It took another 500 years before it would happen. Yet when a small child was born to a young virgin girl in the peasant lands of Galilee, the LORD's plans finally came into focus.

The LORD told his captive people, I know the plan, just trust me. They didn't know it, but all of it led to Jesus. The LORD still reminds us that he know the plan...and now we get to look back to Jesus as proof positive that he did know the plan and that when he tells us he still does, we can trust him. Paul wrote, **he who did not spare his own Son, but have him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him.** The LORD fulfilled his plan. Gave his Son to live and die for you...to forgive you of your worry and doubt and fear by dying the death those sins deserved. If the LORD was willing to do that, can't we trust that his plans will be for our good even when we don't understand them? Just look to Good Friday. It produced nothing but confusion and sorrow for the disciples...until Jesus rose. The LORD knew the plan. So can't we trust that whatever he DOES allow to happen...pandemic or health...prosperity or poverty...life or death...will be ok because it's part of the plan he knows

Friends, the LORD still knows the plan! I don't...so I can't tell you what it is...but as we face a new year, I'm content to know that HE DOES. And that's enough. May you find that same comfort and contentment in the year ahead. The LORD knows the plan and that's enough. Amen.