



“Pray for Every Home”

Jeremiah 29:4-7

Idea: God’s blessing runs on the rails of His people’s prayers.

Intro: *“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

– Gen 12:2, 3c

It has been God’s plan from the beginning to use His people to be the catalyst and instrument of His blessing. God desires to be in relationship with every tribe, language, people, and nation. His plan involves His church serving the people of the world and sharing the glorious message of His gospel with them. For some reason, however, it seems the majority of Christians in the American Church believe there is a plan B. Now, they obviously believe that God calls and sends His people out to the lost world, but they think that there must be a plan B for those who have no one sent to them. The eye opening reality is that there is not a plan B.

Each individual person is born a sinner into this world and separated from God (Rom 3:9-18). Everyone apart from Christ lives in rebellion against God, but rather than condemning and destroying the rebellious, God made a way of forgiveness and righteousness for them by paying their sin debt on the cross (Rom 3:21-24). As a result, God extends His forgiveness and grace to all people.

Read Romans 10:13. – The Lord extends an invitation of blessing to every home and to every individual on the face of the earth. He invites the Africans living in southwest Uganda to leave their syncretistic worship and find life in Him. He invites the Moroccan immigrants living in Barcelona to find eternal blessing in Christ. He invites Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims living in India to experience the blessing of His presence. He invites the post-Christian secularists of Stockholm, Sweden to find hope, life, and blessing in a relationship with Jesus. And the Lord invites the individuals living in your neighborhood, on your street, and next door to you to experience the blessing of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. How then does God’s invitation of blessing get to them? Paul gives us the answer?

Read Romans 10:14-15.

God has blessed you so that you might be a blessing to others.

Over the next several weeks, we are looking at and learning how we can be a blessing to every home in our community individually and as a church. We want our neighbors to know that we love them because God loves

them. Do your neighbors know that God loves them by the way you love your neighbors? What message do you send to your them?

Illustration: One of my pastor friends tells a story about how his young daughter at the age of three used to tell everyone she met, “I love you.” She even told the sixteen-year-old muscular lifeguards at the pool. At this point the dad realized he needed to have a talk with the little girl, so he explained that although in their family they expressed themselves in this way, she shouldn’t tell everyone that she loves them. Well, the family moved into a new house in a new neighborhood. One day a neighbor brought over a pie as a gift to welcome them. They chatted at the door for a little bit. Then as the lady turned to leave, the pastor’s young daughter ran out onto the porch and yelled, “We don’t love you!”

When you think about it, the young girl actually had the right heart. The two Great Commandments Jesus said are “love God” and “love people” (Matt 22:37-40). What message do you send to your neighbors each day? Is it, “I love you and God loves you?” Or is it, “I don’t love you and neither does God?”

Inquiry: The reality today is that few Americans know their neighbors’ names. Even fewer according to surveys interact with their neighbors on a daily basis. According to the General Social Survey a recent report found that a third of the people have never even interacted with their neighbors, and only about 20% of Americans spend time regularly with people living next door to them. You see this is a great change in our culture. According to public policy expert Marc Dunkleman who wrote *The Vanishing Neighbor*, “There used to be the necessity to reach out and build bonds with people who live near by...From the 1920s to the 1960s there was this sort of cohort effect in which people were more inclined to find security that existed in neighborhoods.” They depended on one another more much more than we do today.

The reality for us as Christians is that we better than anyone should understand the necessity of community. And we should be communicating this need to our neighbors who may not have a clue about how Jesus and His church can make a difference in their lives. Rather than shouting to our neighbors, “We don’t love you,” we should be shouting, “We love you.”

Over the next few weeks through this “Bless Every Home” series, we will learn that it is not likely our neighbors will know the love of God unless we pray, care, share, and disciple them. This morning, I am preaching on the subject “Pray for Every Home.”

In Jeremiah 29, the people of God have been conquered and carried away into exile. They are living in the land of Babylon.

Read Jeremiah 29:4-7.

This word from God was difficult for these Jews to comprehend. They had yet to grasp the reality that they had been conquered, but God turned their situation around for them. He pointed out that it wasn’t so much that Judah had been conquered as much as it was that God had sent them into exile. He wanted them to remember and never forget that though they were in Babylon, they were still His people. So here is the question for us as members and regular attenders of Red Lane Baptist Church, “How can we bless the Lord and bless every home?”

Let me give you some thoughts because there are some dangers we have to understand and carefully avoid as a church. There are some attitudes we can have as a church.

Attitudes Toward the City

- **Apathy**

We can be apathetic toward the city or county that we call home. Right now we are in Powhatan. Some of you live in Amelia, Chesterfield, Cumberland, Goochland, and Midlothian. If we are not careful, we

can become apathetic toward the place where we live and care nothing at all about the people or their welfare. Apathy is a dangerous attitude that can develop in our hearts if we are not careful. Jesus was never apathetic toward the people of God (Matt 23:37).

- **Animosity**
It is the idea of being against the city. It is the idea of wanting to escape from it and keep it at a distance. It is an “us vs. them” attitude. This was the attitude Jonah had when God sent him to Nineveh. He wanted nothing to do with that wicked city. Animosity leads to self-righteousness and isolationism. We must never forget that but for the grace of God we too would be without Christ. And we must never forget that God has not called us to forsake the world. We are to be engaged in the world but not of it.
- **Imitation**
Some churches try to imitate the city. They attempt to look, feel, and act like the city. They want to be just like everyone around them. Now, on one level it is good to know the context of the community. This is a good missional mentality as we try to connect with those living around us, but we must never forget that God calls us to maintain our distinctiveness from the community. We are to be in the world but not of it (John 17:15; 1 Cor 5:10). We must never forget that we belong to the Church of Jesus Christ that is loyal to the Lord and the Word of God.

What are we to be about? How are we to respond? What should our attitude be? We are not to be in the city, of the city, or against the city. But we should be for the city. This is what God says to us in Jeremiah 29:7. In this passage God gives us some instructions on how we can be a blessing to every home.

1. Don't be of the city. (Jer 29:5-6)

In verse 4 we see that God is speaking to His people whom He had sent into exile. He is speaking to the people of Judah who had been taken captive by Babylon and carried away into a wicked land. Babylon had beaten down the Jews. They had destroyed their cities and desecrated their temple. And here God tells His people how they are to respond and live in this foreign land (vs. 5-6). He is telling them, “I want you to be and live as My people even though you are in a foreign land. I want you to grow and multiply. I don't want you to decrease.”

God understood what the Babylonians did to the people they conquered. Babylon would decimate the people they conquered. They uprooted the peoples from their land, religion, and culture. Then they would transplant them into their land and culture. They would beat them down and then bless them with new opportunities within the empire. Daniel and his friends are examples of this.

God is saying through Jeremiah, “Never forget whose you are. I sent you into Babylon. I am your God and Savior. Therefore, be fruitful and multiply. Pray for the city. Seek its welfare. Be My light in this dark world. But do not allow yourselves to become *of* the city.”

This leads us to a second instruction.

2. Don't be against the city. (Jer 29:7)

God doesn't tell the Jews to oppose the city but to seek its welfare. The word *welfare* comes from the Hebrew word *Shalom*. This word means “peace.” But it means more than simply the cessation of hostility. *Shalom* declares the ceasing of hostility coupled with the flourishing of blessing over one's life. So God tells the Jews, “Don't be against the city, but seek its welfare. Pray for God's *shalom* to cover it. Pray for the ceasing of hostility in the lives of its people. Pray for the blessing of God to abound in its in every home.”

How do you think those in our community think of us? How do they think of you? Are we known as a people of the city? Are you known as a person who is against the city? Do they even think of us at all? We ought to be known as a people who are for the city. This is the heart of God. But pragmatically, it makes sense too. According to verse seven, when the city prospers we prosper. When Powhatan grows, Red Lane grows. Don't be of the city, but don't be against it either. This leads to our final instruction.

3. Pray for the city. (1 Timothy 2:1-6)

What would happen if every one of us began praying for our neighbors and the people living in Powhatan, Cumberland, Chesterfield, Amelia, Goochland, and metro-Richmond? What would happen to our cities and counties if we truly desired to be a blessing to every home by praying for every home? Why should we pray?

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

First and foremost, as followers of Jesus Christ we are to be praying for the people in our community. We pray for the people in our communities because God desires for them to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (vs. 4). Does God desire for all people to be saved? YES!! But we discover in the Bible that His saving activity largely runs upon the prayers of His people. He does not act on behalf of lost people until someone is praying for them.

How can we pray for the people living in our communities? We do it by breaking it down. I am going to take my street and my neighborhood, and you take your street and your neighborhood. And we are going to begin to pray together for our individual neighborhoods and ask God to bless every home. As we collectively do so, we will begin to pray for every home in our communities.

We pray because God desires all people to be saved (vs. 4). We pray because Jesus the mediator between God and every person (vs. 5). We pray because Jesus is the Redeemer who gave His life as a ransom for all (vs. 6).

Conclusion: This is what we must think about in our neighborhoods and on our streets. God desires to bless every home. He desires to be in relationship with every person. And on top of that, He is worthy of the worship of every person.

I want us to pray right now for the people living around us in our communities. With your heads bowed let's pray together. Visualize the faces and names of the people who live in your community. Let's call on God on behalf of our communities. Maybe you want to voice the name of your community or neighborhood (Powhatan, Midlothian, Cumberland, Amelia, Flat Rock, Red Lane, Trenholm, Mill Quarter, Wood Lake). Right now the Lord is bringing to your memory the names of people who live around you. Imagine what would happen if rather than just driving by places on your way to work and home, you began to pray specifically for those homes? How would it change the people living in those houses? How would it change you?