**“Hide and Seek”**

Going deeper in Jeremiah 29:1-14

**INTRODUCTION** About 18,000 people have been carried off to Babylon (see 2 Kings 24). What follows is Jeremiah’s letter to them.

**READ** – *Read (passage) aloud. Read it several times. Listen for what the Spirit of God is saying, don’t just think about it.* 1 This is the letter the prophet Jeremiah sent to the remainder of the elders among the surviving exiles, to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away as captives from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2 This happened after King Jehoiachin (or Jeconiah), the queen mother, the government leaders and all the craftsmen and skilled laborers had gone into exile from Jerusalem. 3 The letter was hand delivered by Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah, king of Judah, had sent to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It said, 4 This is the message from the God of Angel Armies, Israel’s God, to all the exiles whom I have allowed to be taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. 5 “Build houses and make yourselves at home in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have children. Encourage your children to marry and have sons and daughters so you might increase and not decrease. 7 Seek the peace and welfare of the city which I carried you into exile and pray for Babylon’s well-being and it will go well for you.” 8 For the LORD of Angel Armies, the God of Israel says, “Don’t be fooled by your so-called prophets and diviners. They are simply telling you to dream dreams that aren’t real. 9 They are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them.” 10 This is what the LORD says about all of this, “After seventy years are completed in Babylon, I will show up for you and fulfill my promise to bring you home. 11 For I know the plans I have for you” declares the LORD, “plans for peace and prosperity and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call to me and walk toward me and pray and you will have my undivided attention. 13 When you look for me you will find me when you look for me with all your heart. 14 When you are serious about finding me you will find me, I will bring you back from captivity and I will gather you from all the places where I have driven you and I will bring you back from the place I have sent you off into exile. You can count on that.”

**ENGAGE** – *Questions for going deeper. God is speaking… to you.*

1. Nebuchadnezzar has conquered Jerusalem and taken 18,000 including leaders, fighting men, and skilled workers to Babylon. Jeremiah has remained in Jerusalem and he sends this letter to those in Babylon. If you were in Babylon as a captive, what would you be expecting a prophet to say?

2. What voices are the people of God not to listen to and believe? Who are they supposed to listen to? What helps you to listen to the right voices?

3. Given their situation, what would a future and a hope have looked like in their minds? Given your situation what does a future and a hope look like for you?

4. Why are the people of God commanded to seek the peace and welfare (shalom) and pray for the nation that had conquered them and taken them as captives into exile?

5. What will be their part in this future and hope and what will be God’s part?

6. Why do you think the LORD says very little about what He will do to Babylon and instead focuses on what the people of God are to do? What does that say to us in a time when blaming someone else seems to be the norm?

7. What helps you to seek the LORD with all your heart?

**PRAY** – *God has spoken. So, reply.*

\*Spend a few moments in silence just being with the LORD. Then praise Him for the ways that He has always been faithful to you. Ask Him for forgiveness for the times that you have turned from Him.

\*Ask the LORD to fill you with the Holy Spirit and give you the ability to quiet the other voices in your life so you can hear Him speak.

\*Ask the LORD to give you the ability to seek Him with your whole heart.

**LIVE** – *This is where the rubber hits the road.*

The people of God are called to turn back to God and seek Him with all their heart. What would it mean for you to turn to Him and seek Him with all your heart? How will you live that out this week?