

The Ministry and Mission of Exiles

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Amen. All right. So this is our vision statement. I've said it every week. Our vision statement is this. We exist to encounter God and experience grace. And that happens through the gospel of Jesus Christ. We want you each week to encounter God, experience his changing, life-changing grace.

[2 : 5 9] And that happens when the gospel is proclaimed. Okay. Now the way we do that, we encourage you to do three simple things. First of all, is be at a gathering like you are right now. I know you're doing good. Way to go. Nice job. And the very first week of this series, we looked at biblically why congregational worship and congregational gathering is important. And then last week, we asked you just to be in a group. And we talked about the fact that you have to have, and this can look different in different contexts, but you need some form of biblical community. This is not enough.

This size of a group is not enough to truly experience the one another's that scripture talks about. Forgiving one another and loving one another and bearing with one another, being patient with one another. Those are things you do in relationships. And so you need some form of biblical community. That might be a men's group, a women's group, a co-ed small group, whatever it is, be in a group. And then what we're going to look at tonight is to live out the gospel, to be on mission for Jesus. And again, that looks different based on all these different lives. We work in different places. We, we, we, we socialize in different places and all these places are places to be on mission for Jesus. So that's what we're going to focus on tonight. As we finish up this series, very excited about the series we'll start next week, but I ain't telling you, you got to come back for it. So Jeremiah 29, if you're able to stand, please do so as we honor the reading of God's word, Jeremiah chapter 29. And we're going to talk about the ministry and mission of being exiles. Look here in verse one, where it says that these are the words of the letters that Jeremiah, the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles and to the priests and the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Now look down at verse four.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, build houses, live in them, plant gardens, eat their produce, take wives and have sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage that they may bear sons and daughters, multiply there and do not decrease, but seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf or in its welfare, you'll find your welfare.

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, do not let your prophets or your diviners who are among you deceive you. Don't listen to the dreams that they dream for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name. I didn't send them declares the Lord for thus says the Lord. There'll be 70 years for Babylon and I will visit you and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord plans for good, for welfare, not for evil to give you a future and a hope. And then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you declares the Lord and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you declares the Lord and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. This is God's word. It's a beautiful passage of scripture. So pray for me that I will teach it faithfully and let's have ears to hear what the, what the Lord has to say to us tonight. So God, here we are. We're ready to hear from you. Talk to us, help me as I preach your word, that as your word is proclaimed, that God, we would hear your voice and that you would speak to each and every one of us very specifically through this passage tonight and help us understand in our own lives what it means to do ministry and mission as an exile. And I pray this in Jesus's beautiful name and God's people said, amen. I mean, you can be seated. The nail that sticks out gets hammered down. You've probably heard that expression before. It's actually an old Japanese proverb. The point of the proverb is simply this, that, that no matter what situation you find yourself in, conformity is the best way to survive.

I mean, after all, the nail that sticks out is going to get hammered down. Maybe you prefer a different proverb, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. But both proverbs really get to the point that, that conformity or its twin compromise is really the only way to make it in the world.

[8 : 07] And there are certainly a lot of examples for this, even in the animal kingdom. Take for example, the, the Eastern screech owl that, that conforms and blends in. Do you see it? Some of you are staring like, yeah, I see it there. It blends into its surrounding or the cuttlefish that, that blends in perfectly to the ocean floor. The Arctic fox that will have brown hair when it's warm, but then have white hair in the winter as a way of, of surviving, of conforming to its surroundings. And of course, this is not just true in the animal world, but it's also true for humans. You think about a soldier that wears camo so, so that he or she can blend in and not be seen by the enemy, or maybe somebody that dresses a certain way to kind of fit in with the style or what everybody else is wearing, or, or somebody that might drive a certain kind of car simply because it's what their father and grandfather drove.

But in one way or the other, most people experience conformity. After all, the nail that sticks up gets hammered down. And I know that there's some of you sitting there like, well, not me.

I mean, I'm not a conformist. I'm an American, right? And we Americans love our individuality. Like I do not conform. I bet you in one way or the other, you've conformed. How many of you've ever said yes to an event you didn't want to go to, but you went because everybody else was going? Or maybe when you got to church and somebody said, how are you doing? You're like, oh, I'm fine. No, you're not.

But you conformed to whatever the expectation was because you're at church. Or maybe somebody was gossiping and you just conformed and joined in on what everybody else was saying. Or, or maybe you acted a certain way at home because you, you didn't want to experience any consequences. Listen, conformity, can we be honest? It's a real struggle for all of us. And one way or the other, compromise or conforming, blending in to our surroundings is something we all deal with. But, but where it's really difficult is as a Christian. It's really, really difficult as a Christian.

Because the question we have to ask is this, do I stick out for God at the risk of being hammered down by the world? Do, do I stick out for my faith where, where I work or where I go to school or where I socialize? Do I dare stick out for my faith in God at the risk of being persecuted for it?

[10 : 48] And the reason why I know that this is a real tendency and struggle for the Christian is because the Bible emphasizes this so often. The apostle Paul, for instance, of the Christians living in Rome, in Romans chapter 12, verse 2, many of you know this verse, do not be, say it, conformed.

Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. The apostle John in 1 John chapter 2, verse 15 says this, do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, the pride of life is not from the father. It's from the world.

Every, if we're honest, every Christian in every age has been faced with the struggle or temptation of conformity. And it is exactly what is happening in Jeremiah 29. Let me set the stage. The year is 596 BC. The nation of Israel has just been taken into captivity by the nation of Babylon. In fact, this is such a significant event in the Old Testament. There's so many books written around this time, books like Daniel and Ezekiel and Jeremiah here, and some of the prophets like Habakkuk right before it. And so this was a really significant moment in the Old Testament in the life of the nation of Israel. And it's significant. Here's why. Listen in closely. The people of God are no longer in their homeland. They're no longer in Jerusalem, meaning that they're no longer where it is safe and comfortable. Instead, they are living as exiles in a foreign land. They're interacting with foreign people. They're being asked to eat foreign food. They're living in a place where people live a different way of life. They're being asked to worship foreign gods. In other words, listen to me.

In Jeremiah chapter 29, Israel is the nail sticking out. And if they don't watch it, they'll be hammered down.

And so they have to learn how do we live as exiles in a foreign land? How do we live as the people of God when we're outside our comfort zone? Or as Brad Paisley would say, our southern comfort zone, right?

[13 : 33] And listen, listen, listen, listen. Don't check out on me because this is Old Testament and Jeremiah. In fact, that language of exile ought to sound familiar to you if you're familiar with the New Testament.

Because listen to me, in the New Testament, that word exile, stranger, alien is precisely the word the New Testament applies to you.

In fact, in 1 Peter chapter 1, in James chapter 1, believers are called exiles and aliens. Notice here in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 11. But our, say it, citizenship is where?

In the United States of America. I'll upset some of you, I don't care. Our citizenship is in heaven. And from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5, 20. Therefore, we are what? Ambassadors for who? Christ. God, making his appeal through us.

[15 : 05] We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. You know what an ambassador is, right? This will preach. I hope you're listening. An ambassador is someone who belongs to a foreign country, who belongs to another country, lives in a foreign country.

Listen, for the very purpose of representing their home. Listen to me. We are ambassadors for Christ.

That is, our citizenship is somewhere else. This will upset you. Our citizenship as Americans is not in America, if you're a Christian.

Your citizenship is where? In heaven. And you are now ambassadors here, not to represent the land in which you live, but the land in which you belong.

And the land in which you belong is seated at the right hand of God. His name is Christ. This is why I get people that get so upset at me because I don't get involved in preaching politics.

[16:09] And listen, I'm not talking about issues that are clearly biblical issues. Of course I would address those. I'm talking about people that have their political campaigns and they want me to take that on.

And so let me just make it very clear, and if you don't like it, I don't care. I am not an ambassador of the United States. I am an ambassador for Christ. And don't question my patriotism or I will punch you, okay?

I'm very patriotic and I love our nation. I absolutely thank God that we get to live in America. Amen? But I don't belong here. I'm not ultimately a citizen here.

And my life exists not to advance the kingdom of America, but the kingdom of God. You are an exile.

You're a stranger, an alien, a citizen of heaven. And you've been called to be here for the mission and ministry of God.

[17:12] You get me? And you say, why are you spending so much time? You haven't even gotten to the text yet. Just hold on. I'm spending all this time doing all this biblical background because what we see in Jeremiah 29 applies to you.

Because just like they are exiles in Babylon, you are exiles in the South Metro. And everywhere in this world you go.

So how did the Lord instruct Israel to do ministry and be on mission as an exile in hopes that that would inform us how we are to do ministry and mission as an exile right here where we are?

Well, there's a couple of different approaches into how to go about being the people of God living in a foreign land. And the first is the approach of what is known as syncretism. Syncretism.

Syncretism is simply the idea of blending everything together. You take a little bit of this and a little bit of that and you just blend it all together. And eventually the two cultures become one.

[18:18] Now, this was specifically the strategy and the approach of the Babylonians. Now, I told you just a moment ago that one of the books that was written during the Babylonian captivity was the book Daniel.

Daniel is actually one of the ones that is taken into captivity. He is one of the exiles to whom this applies to. And do you remember what Babylon tried to do with Daniel and others in Daniel chapter 1 verse 5?

Look at it. The king assigned them a daily portion of food that the king ate and of the wine that he drank.

And they were to be educated for three years in Babylonian schools. And at the end of the time, they were to stand before the king. And you remember what Daniel does. I'm sorry, but I can't eat that food.

Because according to the Old Testament law, I'm only to eat certain things. And so I'm sorry, I can't eat your Babylonian food. I have to eat what God has instructed me to eat.

[19:20] Aren't you glad that we live under the new covenant and get to have bacon? Right? Daniel can't have bacon. And he sticks to the guns. He won't compromise.

He won't blend in. But the point that I'm trying to make here is notice the approach of the Babylonians, which was quite different than the Egyptians. The Babylonians have learned from history.

You see, the Egyptians tried to beat Israel down. Listen, the Babylonians simply tried to blend them in.

And the reason why you don't beat them down, because eventually they're going to get angry and rebel. So, notice it on the screen. Why beat Israel down when you can just blend Israel in?

Hey, come live with us. Work with us. Marry our Babylonian women. Study at the University of Babylon. Eat at our Babylonian buffets.

[20 : 19] Blend right on in. Why? Because if you do it long enough, they won't be able to tell the difference between the Babylonian or the Jew. It's brilliant. You don't beat them down.

You blend them in. And if Israel blends in, she will no longer be holy. You know what the word holy means. It just means set apart.

Israel, when she was birthed and entered into covenant with Yahweh, was told to be a holy nation. That is a set apart nation. You are not to be like Babylon.

You are not to be like Assyria. You are to be a holy nation. Don't blend in. I've used this before, but it's such a perfect illustration. Do you remember Lou Bolin, the Chinese artist who was famous for immersing himself in the environment?

In fact, his nickname became the Invisible Man. See if you can find him. Here he is standing in front of a grocery aisle. You can see him, right? A little bit there in the middle.

[21 : 22] If nothing else, look at the bottom and you'll see his legs. Here he is standing in front of some statues. Do you see him? Just a little bit off center there. And the way he does this, it's really amazing.

He starts by sticking out. Not just by how he looks, but he gets painted in such a way that by the time it's all said and done, he blends in to his environment.

That's what the Babylonians are trying to do with Israel. And listen, Christian, that is what the world would love to do with you. We'll just blend you in and take on the value system that we have and embrace all the things that we like.

And before long, no one will know the difference between American or Christian. And the issue for us is this. Notice it on the screen.

We won't reach the world by becoming like the world. We won't reach the world as exiles by becoming like the world.

[22 : 29] It's why Paul says in Romans, don't be conformed to the world. It's why John says do not love the world. If we as Christians are pursuing the same kind of life and the same kind of values, well then what's the difference?

Notice this. It's going to be really hard to be a fragrance of Christ if you smell like everybody else. You should amen that. That's all right, all right? The Bible says that we're to be a fragrance of Christ, but you'll never stick out if you smell like the world.

And so Israel was not to blend in, was not to take the approach of syncretism and to just blend in her surroundings. Here's the other approach that's offered that some people try.

Many Christians try this one. And it was actually the approach offered by the very prophets of Israel. Look at verse eight. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, don't let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive.

You don't listen to the dreams they dream, for it is a lie. And they are prophesying to you in my name. And I didn't send them, declares the Lord. For thus says the Lord, when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

[23 : 47] The second approach is the approach of separatism. Separatism. Listen, here's what the false prophets of Israel were saying to their very own people in the Babylonian captivity.

They were saying, listen, this captivity is only going to last two or three years. So here's our strategy. What we're going to do is we're going to stay outside the city. We're going to be our own little place to camp and be completely separate and isolated from the Babylonians, right?

So in other words, the message would have gone like this. Tell me if it sounds familiar. We don't have long. The end is near. It's coming soon. Rescue's on the way.

So isolate yourself from Babylon. It sounds a lot like a lot of the prophecy people today. Isolate yourself from the world. Have nothing to do with the world because rescue is coming soon.

And so only work Christian jobs. Only go to Christian schools. Only wear Christian clothes. Whatever that is. Only listen to Christian music. And if you drive a car, you better have a Jesus fish on it.

[24 : 58] You make that a Christian car. And so you isolate yourself in every way from the world. And you live in this little Christian combine.

This little Christian bubble. And what is crazy to me and is worth its own sermon on its own is that these were coming from the religious people. Not from God.

This is not what God said. We're going to see what God said in just a moment. But the religious people, some, I probably will get in trouble for this, but that's okay.

It's the religious conservatives conservatives of Israel's day that were arguing for separatism, not against conservatism, just saying that it was the religious conservatives saying you shouldn't be involved at all with the world, have nothing to do with Babylon.

And so they ended up going the other extreme. And the problem, of course, is this. God never said that. They're trying to speak on behalf of God what God didn't say.

[26 : 02] What did God actually say? Lean in. It's going to be 70 years. You're not leaving anytime soon. You're going to be here a while.

It's not going to be two or three years and you're out, so just isolate. It's going to be 70 years. And I'm going to call you to do something different than separate from Babylon.

After all, notice this on the screen. We're not going to reach the world if we isolate from the world. Man, I don't care if I get in trouble for this. How much good will we be for the mission of Jesus Christ if we only associate with Christians?

Ding dong. Hello. Get outside, speaking to myself, your Christian bubble. Don't separate from the world.

I remember, this is a story some time ago that I heard about a lady. She went to her pastor. She was struggling at her job. She worked with a lot of non-Christians and she was just exhausted and so she sat down in the chair and just started complaining, complaining, complaining, complaining about how difficult it was to work in that environment.

[27 : 18] And her pastor just looked at her and said, where do you put lights? And she just dismissed it. He's being insensitive. She just continued on. You don't understand how hard it is. You don't know the people that I work with, a bunch of num-nuns.

I work for a num-num, just on and on and on. And he just looked at her again and said, where do you put lights? And again, she just dismissed it, kept going like, this is the worst place a Christian can possibly be.

And a third time he said, I don't know why it usually takes three times, Peter. Where do you put lights? And it hit her.

And she verbally out loud said, I guess in dark places. And then all of a sudden it hit her that maybe God had put her in a dark place to bring a little light.

The light of the gospel. How is a dark world ever going to see the light of the gospel if you isolate from it? If you live entirely separate from it.

[28 : 22] And I told you I'd come back to this. Notice this on the screen. The reason that we keep things simple here at Faith Family is because I want you to spend less time in meetings and more time on mission.

This is a real issue that I have with the church today. Not just, I'm not talking about this church, I'm talking about the church. Is we spend 80% of our time doing religious activity and very little on mission for Jesus.

So I want Faith Family to be simple so that we minimize meeting work and maximize mission work. And you're going to be sent to where you work and to the soccer field and to the stadium and all the different places that you're going to go.

And rather than being absorbed in the church, I want you to be absorbed in Christ wherever you go. This is how to be a exile in a foreign land.

And in some ways, I'm already in trouble so I'll just keep going. I want you to be a worldly Christian. I want you to be a worldly Christian. I know you don't like that language, but understand what I mean.

[29 : 32] I'm not suggesting worldly in the sense that you take on the world's value system or worldly in the sense that you enjoy all the things in terms of what the world believes and its convictions.

I'm just saying, be a Christian who's out there in the world. Listen, tomorrow, tomorrow, I'm going to take my son, even if it's for naught, to a Vikings game.

Okay? Even if it's for naught. You know what? We're going to enjoy some food and we're going to enjoy the atmosphere of that game and I want you to enjoy a good steak unless you're vegan slash not a Christian.

Right? That's a joke. I'm joking. I'm joking. I'm joking. Listen, enjoy the world. Enjoy a sunrise. Enjoy the things that are in this life. Why?

Because this is our father's world. It doesn't belong to the culture. It belongs to God. So live in it and enjoy it.

[30 : 33] Just don't embrace the value system of the fallenness of it. That's what scripture tells us to avoid. Otherwise, don't sit outside the city for two or three years waiting for rescue.

Move into Babylon. So if we're not to blend in and we're not to isolate, then how are we to live as exiles on mission in a foreign land?

Here it is. Here's the main point. Now you can start timing me. Just kidding. I'm almost done. Verse seven. Verse seven. I love this verse. I love this verse. But seek the welfare that is the good of the city where I sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for in its good you will find your good.

This is beautiful. The approach is serve the world. It's not blend in with it. It's not isolate from it.

It's move in those neighborhoods and serve it. God's desire for Israel was not to become like the Babylonians nor isolate from the Babylonians but, and I bet you, I just want to see their faces when they read this letter from Jeremiah.

[32 : 00] You want us to serve who? You want us to seek the good of who? You mean the very people that just took us captive? The very people that stripped us from our homeland?

You want us to serve them? That's right. I'm moving you into Babylon for the good of Babylon.

Oh, that'll preach and I can tell by the awkwardness in this room some of you do not like this message and I don't care. This is how we live as exiles and I know it's hard.

I know it's challenging. Imagine being Israel, being called to move in, build houses, raise families in a way that seeks the good of the very nation that took them captive.

So how would we even do this? A few things quickly and I'll be done. Verse 4. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem.

[33 : 20] Here's the first thing. Here's the first thing. It starts with you've got to and I've got to you ready? Trust the providence of God. Here's what I mean by that.

Who sent Israel to Babylon? Israel? You think Israel took a vote? See, I'm kind of tired of this Jerusalem thing. Anybody up for new scenery?

How about Babylon? No. No. Over and over in the text, God makes it clear to Israel like he wants to make it clear to you tonight that they are in Babylon because God sent them there.

You are where you are because that's where God wants you to serve. You are where you are because that's where God wants you to serve and it doesn't matter how you got there.

You may be where you are through difficult circumstances. It may be that you grew up here all your life. It may be that you got married and moved here. It could be that you went to school at the University of Minnesota and just stayed here.

[34 : 25] It could be that you lost your job and was forced to get a different job in a different city. Listen, it doesn't matter how you got there. You're there. It doesn't matter how you got here.

You're here. Notice this on the screen. Israel was in Babylon not because they wanted to be in Babylon. It's because God brought them to Babylon. I mean, seriously, do you think I chose to live in Minnesota?

Right? You think this southern boy was like, I know what I want to do. I want to go freeze for Jesus. Right? No! Not on my plan. Right?

Not on my five-year plan. I promise you. But I'm convinced that God brought me here. I'm convinced that God brought me here.

Because whether you want to be in Minnesota or not, guess what? Right now you are. And the Lord might change that. He might take you into captivity to Hawaii. Be awesome.

[35 : 23] Please, Lord. I'd take that assignment, right? You get what I'm saying. The Lord moves his people where he wants his people. Not for the good of you because it isn't your home.

But for the good of the city he brought you to. For the good of the neighborhood you live in. For the good of the office you work in. And if you don't get that mindset you will go crazy as an exile.

Because you're going to start feeling too at home here. But when you know this isn't your home this is just your assignment. This is just where God has placed you to do ministry and mission.

Then you can become detached in a good way from being self-absorbed and actually serve. Actually serve.

Let me remind you of Acts 17 verse 24. The God who made the world and everything in it being the Lord of heaven and earth does not live in temples made by man. He's not served by human hands as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

[36 : 40] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth. Watch this is the point. Having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

See, we gotta trust the providence of God that he has us where he wants us in order for us to be exiles on mission for God.

Here's a second thing. Look at verse 5. Verse 5. Again, build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their produce. Verse 7. Seek the good or the welfare of the city where I sent you into exile.

Pray to the Lord on its behalf. So pray for the people that you live with and for in its good and its welfare you will find yours. The second thing is seek the good of the city.

And I'm using city here. It could be seek the good of the neighborhood. Seek the good of the office. Like, go into work on Monday thinking, how can I make this a better place?

[37 : 44] How can I serve in such a way that I make the Babylon in which I live a better place? If the schools are bad, can I volunteer in a way to make them better?

I want to pray for the people I work with, pray for the city I live in, and on and on and on it goes. One of the things that I really hope we can, as we grow as a faith family, cultivate in this community is this.

I don't know everything about y'all, but I know this, you sure love this city. You love Apple Valley and Rosemount and Burnsville and Lakeville and there's one thing I know about faith family is that you really want to be a good for the community that you live in.

That is what we ought to want to be as believers in seeking the good of the city. Augustine, in his book City of God, wrote this, our citizenship in God's kingdom, this is so good, should make us the best citizens of earth.

Let me read that again. Our citizenship in God's kingdom should make us the best citizens of earth, not because we're more patriotic or wise, but because we do out of obedience to God what others do only if they're forced.

[39 : 04] what makes us a good citizen in this world is the fact that we're citizens of heaven. And that shapes the way we think about being exiles on mission for God.

Here's a, this is the non-obvious one. The non-obvious one is invest in the next generation. Invest in the next generation. You'll see in verse six where it says, and this may not be on the screen, take wives, have sons, give your daughters in marriage.

They may be our sons and daughters. Multiply and do not decrease. The reason why this is kind of the non-obvious approach is that one of the things that must as Christians do is make sure we're leaving a legacy.

Like do, the practical application of this is not everybody go home and have children. Okay? The application of day sermons, everybody go have children. No, we take this as, listen, the reason why God wants Israel to keep having a legacy is because the way the people of God continue on to get you to salvation in Christ is Israel continues to exist.

And if Israel is to continue to exist, Israel must have a focused intensity on the coming generation. I think outside of preaching the gospel, the number one thing we do in this faith family is take care of children.

[40 : 31] instruct children. Give them the word of God and teach children. Same thing with parents. Listen, one of the most important things that you can do is invest biblically in your children that they might carry on the legacy of the faith.

The greatest impact that you will have for the Great Commission will not be the amount of mission trips you go on, but the amount of time you invest in the next generation of believers so that we do not decrease.

And here's the last one, verse 8, this is it. He tells the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel said, don't listen or don't let your prophets or your diviners who are among you deceive you.

Do not listen to the dreams they dream. Another way we have to, application for us, in being exiles today is whatever you do, don't lose sight of the gospel.

There's going to be a lot of false teaching and a lot of false teachers and a lot of things. We must not get sidetracked on those things. Remain focused, are you ready, on what God said.

[41 : 41] Not what false prophets say, not what the newest invention and study curriculum is, no, no, no, no. Focus on what God said, not what others are saying.

And so to be, I hope this is helpful, for us, to be in exile, an ambassador for Christ in this world, we are not to separate from it, but we're also not to blend in.

We're to move in and serve it. And we do that by trusting, this is where God has me. I want to be good for where I work and where I live.

I want to invest in the next generation of believers so that we don't decrease, and whatever I do, I won't take my eyes off the good news of Jesus. I will remain focused on what God has said.

And if we will do this, we will image the very one that we call Savior. Is this not the approach of Jesus?

[42 : 42] It isn't what we see here in Jeremiah 29, ultimately the approach of our Savior. Listen, Jesus didn't become like us in terms of our sin, and Jesus also didn't isolate himself from us.

I'm not going to earth. Aren't you glad Jesus didn't remain separate from you? You'd be in hell right now. He entered in to serve us, and in serving us, save us, and redeem us.

The very mission and ministry we are called to do is the very ministry and mission of our Savior, who entered into the world and didn't become like it, didn't isolate from it, but died for it.

You say, Pastor, I'm afraid to serve this world. I'm afraid to make my faith known, because I fear that I will be persecuted. After all, the nail that sticks up gets hammered down.

And yes, my dear friend, that's true, but I remind you that you are a follower of a man who refused to conform to the things they tried to force him to conform to, and he suffered mightily for it.

[44 : 15] Lean in. No one knows more than Jesus how the nail that sticks up gets hammered down. And yet, through it all, he didn't conform, he didn't isolate, he served and he loved, not just for the welfare of the city, but for the salvation of the world.

And that is the ministry and mission of an exile. And all God's people serve. Amen. Let's pray. So, Lord, Lord, help us, help us.

There's a lot of different things that we need to think about differently. It may simply just start with the fact that we view this life as our home, but we are not citizens of this world, we are citizens of heaven.

We have not been called into this world just to seek our good. Our good is found when we seek the good of others. The welfare of Israel was found in seeking the welfare of Babylon.

And so help us with this message tonight rethink life in terms of its ministry and mission as an exile in a foreign land. And yes, we love this country and we love this world because it is our father's world, but we've been called here to serve it, that it might be saved and redeemed by the Lord Jesus.

[45 : 54] So as we talk about our vision here at Faith Family, yes, we want to gather and yes, we need to be in a group, but we must also remember the ministry of an exile and live out the gospel throughout the South Metro and beyond.

And so help us be that fragrance of Christ right here where you've placed us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Abend Abend Abend Thank you.