

My prayer for ALC

Sunday Sept 26, 2021

Introduction

My last day

- This is my last Sunday
- For 15 years I have faithfully given you the Word. I don't have much else, but I have given you the Word
- I have served you in lots of ways behind the scene - and it was my pleasure to do so
- I've been allowed to share your joy and sorrow - walking beside you through them!
- We've celebrated victory and stood firm in times of trouble
- Most of all - I've shared communion with you month after month, recalling the grace of Jesus!

The message today

- Today I want to just give some *Final Instructions* to you as you carry on
- This is my heart for ALC
- Based on Jeremiah's admonition to the exiled people of Judah
- **Jer 29:13-14 (ESV)** *(13) You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. (14) 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.*
- From this passage and it's surrounding context I want to share four things I hope for ALC

Message

Stay in the Word

- This passage is part of Jeremiah's message to them as they are in captivity
- Jeremiah had warned them of God's judgment - telling them how to get through the struggle and cruelty of the Babylonian siege
- They didn't listen! They surrounded themselves with false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear.
- This will happen / Is happening now. See **2 Tim 4:3-4 (ESV)** (3) *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, (4) and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*
- I have seen the enemy so easily deceive God's people. There is so much masquerading as truth - but is really a lie
- The only way to have discernment is to know the word!
- Read, memorize, study, follow the Word

Forsake not

- These were people from Judah who had been picked up and resettled in Babylon
- The thing that I love - is that they remained a distinct community even in captivity
- Jeremiah is able to write to them and encourage them and they remain faithful to the Lord throughout the 70 years of captivity and God grants them safe return
- In these last days it's so important we continue to gather together for worship and the ministry of the Spirit
- See **Heb 10:24-25 (ESV)** (24) *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*
- We are called to one another.
- TV Options, online (YouTube) options - all good - but it's not Church
- Church is where we minister to one another
- Where we bear one another's burdens
- Where the Holy Spirit's gifts flow from you to others - and vice versa
- I know since covid things have become slack - but this is the enemy's doing
- Christianity is a team sport. We need one another
- Consider the metaphors used to describe Christianity:

- We are the Body - each part special and unique but working together under the head
- We are the building - Jesus the foundation and each of us living stones fitted together
- We are the branches - we are connected to him and intertwined together
- We are made to belong to a local body of believers!
- Ask yourself: why am I not in church?

Seek the Lord

- This is the promise from our text - if we seek Him, we will find Him
- Through the years I have prayed with you and for you. I've lifted up your needs, and we have been blessed as God himself has answered our prayers time and time again!
- The one prayer request that I prioritize above them all: a fresh revelation of Jesus
- We need HIM
- When we experience such...
 - Our worship is changed
 - Our priorities are changed
 - Our stand is strengthened
- See Thomas - skeptical, logical and unbelieving.
- How often are our hearts like his
- Yet when Christ appears **John 20:28 (28)** *Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"*
- The #1 prayer I have for this church (and for me) is a fresh encounter with Jesus Christ!

Finish Strong

- Jeremiah's prophecy to these people was that God wasn't done yet.
- **Jer 29:10-13 (ESV)** *(10) "For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. (11) For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (12) Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. (13) You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*
- Just because they were exiles - flung far away from home, God was still working to bring them back

- Jeremiah was encouraging them not to become discouraged or quit - but to hold on to the promises of God (even though they seemed impossible / improbable!)
- This is my encouragement to you
- We are all in a race, and we must determine to take hold of the prize for which God has taken hold of us
- As Paul considers God's grace he makes these statement: **Phili 3:13-14 (ESV)**
(13) Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- We must determine to enter heaven. No matter what life throws at us. No matter what doubt assails us
- Run the race, and finish strong!!

Closing

- Change is difficult!
- I am praying for you and I trust you will pray for me and my family
- This is the Lord's church - and He will provide the right leadership going forward.
- It has been my privilege and honor to serve you these last 15 years