

# Jeremiah Chapter 29 v 11 (B)

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[ 0 : 00 ] who is the Lord of this church as we celebrate this anniversary Sunday of God's goodness over these 42 years.

I want to pick up from verse 15 of chapter 1, if you've got it there, and read to verse 23.

But particularly thinking about the person of Jesus Christ who is described in this way in Colossians 1.15. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

For by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church.

He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

[ 1 : 06 ] For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you wholly in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel, this is the gospel that you heard, and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Well, it's our Lord Jesus Christ who we come to worship, the one who created all things and for whom all things were created. Let's stand and we're going to sing on the projector behind us.

Jesus is Lord, the cry that echoes through creation. Jesus is Lord, the cry that echoes through creation.

[ 2 : 33 ] Jesus is Lord, the cry that echoes through creation.

As earth, He willil, the Deutsche Testament. Jesus is Lord, the cry that shout through creation. And there is He will read ■■■■ of heart, godless, true spirit.

The Holy Spirit here it is, Christ I, Lord, we honor Jesus our King. Jesus is born, but to live gloriously empty, not even death can crash this dream of love.

The price is paid, the chains are lost and we're forgiven, and we can run into the arms of God.

Jesus is born, but shout of joy and cry all night praise, as He returns to every new house alone.

[ 4 : 19 ] And every eye and every heart will see His glory, the judgment of all will take His children home.

If somebody might kindly get me a glass of water, if anybody just could get me one for the moment, that'd be great. Thank you so much. I know it's a ploy of yours to make me preach shorter sermons, but it's just not going to work.

I see through your schemes. But I'm not on a three-glass sermon as I was last week tonight. Well, I don't think so anyway, but we could be here for a while.

But Psalm 139, I'm going to read the psalm. Let's listen again to God's Word before we continue in our worship. It's the psalm of David.

O Lord, You have searched me and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar.

[ 5 : 40 ] You discern my going out and my lying down. You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, You know it completely, O Lord.

You hem me in, behind and before. You've laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there. If I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there, Your hand will guide me.

Your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, surely the darkness will hide me. And the light become night around me. Even the darkness will not be dark to You.

The night will shine like the day. For darkness is as light to You. For You created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made.

[ 6 : 46 ] Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them.

Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with You. If only You would slay the wicked, O God.

Away from me, You bloodthirsty men. They speak of You with evil intent. Your adversaries misuse Your name. Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord, and abhor those who rise up against You? I have nothing but hatred for them. I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me.

[ 7 : 48 ] And lead me in the way everlasting. We thank God for His faithful and wonderful word. We are back in Jeremiah and chapter 29.

We looked at the first half of this chapter this morning, and particularly verse 11. So Jeremiah and chapter 29 and verse 11.

And we just, again, looked at the first half of the verse. And this is what the Lord God said to His people, and what He continues to say to His people, because His word is everlasting and unchanging.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.

Plans to be a future. There's many skills that other people have that I'm slightly envious of, and I've never been able to really attain myself.

[ 8 : 49 ] One of them is the ability to play chess, and the other is to play snooker. Now, I can play them, but not with any ability and not with any proficiency either.

So if you do happen to play those games, don't challenge me, because you'll just humiliate me and ruin me completely. But I understand that to be good at either of those games, and others as well, you need to have the sort of mind that can think several moves ahead.

And so a chess master can look at any configuration upon the board, and in his mind not only plan how he will play so as to win the game in as few moves as possible, but also he can include in his thinking all the possible moves that his opponent will make at the same time.

And a snooker player, as he looks upon the table with the balls scattered in various directions, is able to work out where and in which order he has to pot the balls remaining, and where the cue ball will come to rest after every shot, so he can pocket them all and win the game.

This great ability to think ahead. I'm sure this is true of many other situations as well, perhaps in the workplace or in the home. There are those who have this ability to plan each step.

[ 10 : 01 ] Of a process to reach their desired goal. Of course, in the two examples I've given, only occasionally, of course, does the plan reach its perfect fulfilment with the winning of the match or the game.

Probably 50% of the time, the opponent's plan is a better plan than yours, and the balls don't go exactly as the player intended them to do so, and so the other player wins.

Even with that great ability to plan ahead and to think several steps ahead, it doesn't always go as hoped. Now, as we've thought already, when we come to the plans of the Lord God, for us as people, we can be sure to rule out any possibility of failure, any possibility of miscalculation.

This is that because the Lord, unlike every other person, is absolutely sovereign in his rule and his control, not only over his own being and life, but over everything that he has created and made.

All is under his sway. He has perfect wisdom, perfect power, no limitations, no weaknesses. And these attributes of the Lord our God and his character mean, of course, that his plans, as we've

been thinking about, are not limited either.

[ 11 : 24 ] They're not limited by time. They're not limited by number of calculations. They're not limited by anything at all. In Psalm 139, which we read just a few moments ago, we've got this incredible concept where David begins to say in verse 17, how precious to me are your thoughts, O God.

We thought about that not just being God's thoughts, but his whole plans, his ideas, his thinking. How vast is the sum of them? Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. So we have, again, this concept, this understanding. And for us, of course, this is why the sovereignty of God, the rule of God, the control of God in the world seems unreasonable. Because we would say for this to happen and that to happen and this to happen and that to happen, it's just impossible for God to be able to control and to work all these things out ahead of time when there's an infinite possibility of what could happen.

But of course, we're thinking with human minds. We're not thinking with the divine knowledge, wisdom of Almighty God. It is no problem to him. David says, it blows my mind to think of your thoughts.

But actually, it blows my mind in a wonderful way because I know that you still are the God who works all things out. And so when we come to these plans that God is speaking about here to the people of God in Jeremiah, and therefore, as we've said, those plans he has for us, his local church, this church, and for us as individuals, the truth of the matter is that God's plans must reach their goal.

[ 12 : 56 ] God's plans must be fulfilled. His promises must be accomplished that he has for us. Verse 11, For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you, not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Then you will call upon me. In other words, the end result of my plans being fulfilled is certain that these things will happen in your life. God doesn't say, I hope, I wish, perhaps, maybe, wouldn't it be nice, and so on.

I plan, it will happen, end of story. And what I want us to think about is the second half of that verse, as I've said, concerning the outcome of God's plans.

What is it that God planned for his people then and continues to plan and to fulfill for his people now, today, and in the future? Well, there's two outcomes, two fulfillments, which are couplets, if I can put it the way.

They're pairs, two pairs. The first pair is this, plans to prosper you, not to harm you, positive, negative, plans to give you hope and a future.

[ 14 : 07 ] And I want to look at those two couplets, those two pairs together. First of all, God's plans for his people then and for now is this, he plans and therefore will prosper us and not harm us.

My plans are to prosper you, not to harm you. Now, various translations, English translations, it can be to do you good and not evil, for peace and not for trouble, for blessing and not for destruction, and so on.

In one sense, there's a generalization about this first plan. It's quite general, prosper you and not do you harm. But in the context of the letter, there are some particular blessings that God has in mind for his people that I want us to think about.

Particularly for these people here, who at this moment were in exile, far from their hometown of Jerusalem, despairing, discouraged, confused as we thought this morning. But then, before we come to them, we need to ask ourselves, why would God need to say these things?

What does God need to say, I plan to prosper you and not harm you? Surely every believer knows that the God that we trust in is a God who never plans the harm of those who are his children.

[ 15 : 20 ] Who knows that God always works for our goods. Yes, that's true. We know those things. We believe those things about God, that he is gracious, that he is lovely, that he is kind, that he is caring.

But of course, God also knows our natural desire, not natural desire, our natural tendency to sort of doubt. Especially when things are hard, when things are troublesome, as we thought, being in exile, being away from God, things going wrong, being conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in our own lives. When things go wrong, the natural tendency in the human heart is always to think, where is God? Why has he let me down? Why has he allowed this harm to happen to me? But also, of course, as Christians, we also have an enemy, the devil.

Like the false prophets of old, his purpose is to sow confusion in our minds. We are in a spiritual battle. And Satan wants us to doubt God. He wants us not to trust him.

He wants us not to lay all of our faith upon him. He wants us to be those who are always in a state of turmoil and unrest and concern and anxiety.

[ 16 : 36 ] He wants us to stop trusting God and enjoying the peace and the confidence that comes from him. But let's think about this truth here.

I want us to grasp hold of it. My plans are to prosper you and not to harm you. Now, we know it, but again, I think one of the things that we miss out on, and I say this to myself as much as to you, is that we don't meditate upon God's promises as much as we do.

We don't really absorb them and take them on board. We read them, but as somebody was praying, they go in one ear and out the other. And that's the same with God's word.

I want us to meditate and pray through and think about these wonderful promises of God. God plans only good for us and not harm. There's never any occasion, there is never any occasion when God plans for the harm of his people.

There is never any occasion when God plans the harm of you, his child. Because if God was ever to plan harm for you, his child, then he would go against the work of Christ upon the cross.

[ 17 : 55 ] Because the work of Christ upon the cross guarantees the fact that God must and will always work for our good. You see, before we were Christians, before we trusted in Christ as our Savior, we were naturally, as we read from Ephesians, enemies of God.

We were alienated, sorry, Colossians, enemies of God. Our sins made us objects of God's anger, righteous anger, because he saw that we were rebellious, we were selfish, we were proud, we were greedy, we were all the things.

And he was angry with us. He took offense against us. But you see, when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, went to the cross and died upon the cross, the Bible declares that there once and for all, he paid the price for our sin.

He took the punishment that we deserve. And he did this once and for all and forever. Here's the writer to the Hebrews describing this wonderful truth in Hebrews in chapter 7, verse 27.

Unlike the other high priests, that's the priests of the Old Testament, he, that's Jesus, does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, then for the sins of the people.

[ 19 : 13 ] He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. The result is this, that the punishment that you and I deserved has been paid in full, completely, absolutely, totally, once and forever by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the result is now that there is no sin that separates us from God, but we are rather reconciled to God, we are brought onto friendly terms with God, and more than that, the Bible says we are adopted into his family, we are his children, we are holy in his sight, righteous in his sight, we are the dearest and most beloved objects of his affections.

That's what's happened. That's what the cross has done for us. So how can we possibly think that God should plan any harm for us when he has purposed and acted to save us at such great cost and extent to himself?

It's impossible, isn't it? Completely counter, I'm trying to think of the word, but I can't think of it, counterintuitive, that's it. I knew big words are there somewhere, it's just trying to find them because I don't use them very often.

Counterintuitive, isn't it? It goes against reason, it goes against natural thinking, it goes against everything to say that God who went to such lengths to save and to rescue us from our sin when he could have left us in our sin, now should suddenly change and become the opposite of everything he's done before.

[ 20 : 45 ] So what a good has God in store for us, his church? What is it that God plans? And he says, I have plans to prosper you and not to harm you. And notice that word, to prosper you.

That is to increase, to grow, to enlarge. Firstly, numerically. We see that again in the letter. When we want to understand a promise like this, we go to the context.

I know I'm repetitive in this way, but it's important that we grasp it. We can't just take this verse and blow it out of all proportions and say it means that God wants us to be financially rich and he doesn't want us ever to be poor or he doesn't ever want us to be sick.

That's not what it's talking about. Look at the context. It's talking about numerical, first of all, numerical increase. Verse 6, Marry and have sons and daughters. Find wives to your sons and give

your daughters in marriage so that they too may have sons and daughters.

Increase in number there. Do not decrease. God's people in an exiled land, in a hostile land, in a foreign land were to grow numerically in number.

[ 21 : 58 ] It would seem to me that in one sense those who were there were thinking we mustn't do any of those things. We mustn't plan to have a family. We mustn't plan to increase because, as you remember, the false prophets were saying we'll be back in Judah in a few years' time.

So we just need to hold the fort, if I can put it that way. Stand still. But that was not God's plan. His God's plan for them included increase and growth.

And that has always been his plan. Do you remember all the way back in Exodus in chapter 1 when the people of God began to grow in number? Pharaoh got a bit upset, didn't he? What are we going to do with them? They're increasing in number.

So he gave instructions. Work them harder. Work them harder. What happened every time that Pharaoh came with what he thought was a good idea to get rid of God's people?

It says this, the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied. Then he came up with another plan, didn't he? Send in the midwives, kill the boys as soon as they're born, infanticide, and that will keep them under.

[ 23 : 00 ] What happens? We find there the people increased, verse 20, and became even more numerous. Do you see? All the schemes, all the planning, certainly of Satan, of the enemy of God's people, always fails because God will always increase his people.

That's what we know has happened all the way through. So when we get to Matthew in chapter 16, somebody again prayed this, verse 18, what does Jesus say? What does he promise to his disciples? I will build my church.

What we are living in in this New Testament day, in this time until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ again, is a time of construction and building in the church. Christ is still building his church and he must build his church and he will build his church until he comes again.

Doesn't church history show us that since the very days of the apostle, no matter the opposition, no matter the times of hardship, no matter the times of low spiritual character, God's plan to increase his church has been carrying on.

And so I would say to you, dear friends, and to us, let's take God's word as it declares it. I have plans for you, what? To prosper you. Who is that true for? Is that true simply for the exiles?

[ 24 : 17 ] Is it true just for the universal church or is it true for the local church as well? I would say to you, dear friends, this is God's word to us today. Otherwise, if it's not, then which bits of it are God's word for us today?

God's purpose is to increase and to build his church numerically here in Whitby. Dear friends, let's take his promise and turn it to him in prayer and work with that expectation.

Lord, you've said that you will prosper. You've said that there will be increase. Lord, increase. Save. Build your church. That's just the first thing.

When God promises that he will prosper them and cause them to grow, he's also talking not only numerically, but he's also talking in the matter of fellowship with himself. They are to grow in their relationship with the Lord.

Notice again, verse 12. What is the outcome of God's plans for them? Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

[ 25 : 19 ] I'll be found by you, declares the Lord. He's talking about fellowship, isn't he? One of the great tragedies and one of the reasons why God sent the people into exile was because of their spiritually low health.

They were just going through the routines of religion. They were just going through the formalism of it all or worse than that, many of them were drifting away into idolatry. They had lost connection with their relationship with the Lord, their God.

They had lost that fellowship. They had lost that joy of loving and knowing the Lord and enjoying his presence. So what does God say? My plan for you is this. I'm going to turn the clock back in one sense and bring you back to myself.

I'm going to bring you into a greater and closer and more precious and dear relationship with myself. You're going to know me more. Isn't that wonderful?

Isn't that marvelous? Isn't that again something that we long for? Isn't that the very prayer and the very heartbeat of the Apostle Paul when he writes to the Philippians in chapter 3 where we sing that song, don't we?

[ 26 : 25 ] All I once held dear, built my life upon. Knowing you, Jesus, it comes from here. What does he say? He says this, I want to know Christ.

And the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of suffering, sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so somehow to attain to the resurrection of the dead. Not that I've already obtained all this or I've already become perfect but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ took, Jesus took hold of me.

And he says at the end of there, all of us who are mature should take such a view of things. In other words, dear friends, whatever our experience of God has been thus far, he wants us to know him more.

Whatever delight and joy we've had in walking with Christ day by day, of fellowshiping with him, of him speaking to us in his word, of knowing that sense of being locked in with the Lord in prayer, he wants us to know it more.

He wants to reveal himself more to us. He wants us to prosper and increase in spiritual health and understanding. We're not meant to stagnate. We're not meant to get to some plateau in the Christian life where things just continue as they have been for some time.

[ 27 : 38 ] We are meant to enjoy closer fellowship with him. So let me ask you, dear friends, and ask myself, is that my desire? Is that my prayer? Is that what I'm about?

Is it that I say to God, Lord, I want to know you more. Lord, I want to enjoy your presence more. Lord, I want to love you more. Lord, I want you to reveal more of yourself to me. I want you to fulfill this promise to prosper me in fellowship with yourself.

He's planned it. He's planned it. His desire is that it should be so. Let's make it our prayer as well.

That as a church, as a body of people together, our growth may be spiritual.

That we might mature in the faith. That we might find out more deeper, more wonderful things about him in the world. There's one more thing I believe that's here for us that God desires and plans for his people.

One, that we should numerically increase. Two, that we should increase, if I put it spiritually, we're in fellowship with the Lord. And thirdly, I believe that God's desire is that his people should increase in Christ-likeness.

[ 28 : 46 ] In Christ-likeness. Verse 13, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. heart. To seek the Lord is to seek not only to be close to him, but to seek to do his will.

Isn't it? When we seek the Lord, we are saying, Lord, I want to know what is your will for me? What is your desire for me? And that really in itself is the essence of Christ-likeness. God wants there to be a real change in the lives of his people.

He doesn't want them merely to become more interested in doing the outward ritual things. He wants the heart to be transformed as well. And God's plan for his people then and for us is that we might be more conformed after his will.

That we might be more like the Lord Jesus Christ who perfectly lived out the very will and the pleasure of God. This is the great truth that we find again in scripture.

That we have been saved for this very purpose that we might bear more of the likeness and the resemblance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 8. We know verse 28 but we know verse 29.

[ 29 : 57 ] Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son. Why did God choose to save us? Why did he plan to have us as his own that we might bear the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ?

2 Corinthians and chapter 3 and verse 18 as well. Where he speaks of this. We who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with every increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is of the spirit.

That's our goal. That's our purpose. That's why we're here that we might know more of the will of God and that our lives may more fashion us to be like Christ.

Those trials, those struggles, those hardships we've been thinking about. They have this goal in view that we might be like Christ. Look at Hebrews chapter 12.

That the suffering may bear forth the fruit of holiness. Again dear friends, is that my goal? Is that what I'm asking God for?

[ 31 : 03 ] Am I praying Lord I want to be more like Jesus? I don't want to just know more fellowship with Jesus. I want to be more like him. I want it's possible if it's possible Lord that when people meet with me, when I open my big mouth, that instead of putting my foot in it, I speak the words of Christ and I show the reality of Christ and I live more in conformity with his will.

That's the prospering. That's the prosperity of any church. Dear friends, the prosperity of any church is not the experiences it has, not the size of its band, not in one sense the size of its congregation, but the prosperity of God is a closer walk with him.

Men and women being converted, more of Christ being seen in us. That's the plan God has for us. We're to pray in that way.

That's the first half. That's the first couplet as it were. Not to harm us, but to do us good, to prosper us. The second one there is similar. Plans to give you hope and a future.

Now I'm going to reverse those words because this is one part where NIV doesn't follow the majority of the English translations. All the other English translations speak about give you a future and a hope.

[ 32 : 26 ] And for NIV, I'm not sure why they've turned those words around. But the fact of the matter is that God's word declares that we are to be those who have a future filled with hope.

God plans a future filled with hope. Now remember the future that God had planned for the exiles in Babylon. It was that they should return to the promised land.

There we are. Verse 14, I'll be found by you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity. Gather you from all the nations and places where I banished you and bring you back. The problem was, if I can put it that way, that God's plan would reach its fulfillment in 70 years' time. They were impatient. They would like it to be next month, next year at the latest.

But no, God says, in 70 years' time. A long way off. And for many of them, of course, it would certainly not happen in their own lifetimes. How were they to respond?

[ 33 : 24 ] How were they to react to these plans of a future and a hope? Well, they weren't to be despondent. They weren't to say, oh, 70 years, it will never happen.

In one sense, that may well have been what they would have thought. Here we are, exiled for the first time, taken out of Judah for the first time since God placed us in the land.

There's hundreds of years before we've been removed from the land. That's the end. That's the end of God's promises. That's the end of his covenant. That's the end of Israel. Our children and our grandchildren will never know the blessings that we had of enjoying being in the land, of worshipping God in his temple.

But no, says God, get rid of those thoughts, get rid of those ideas. For instead, I say to you, there is a sure and certain hope that there is coming a day when you shall have future and hope.

And they were to encourage each other as they looked to that day. They were to encourage their descendants after them, looking to that day. Now, again, there's been many people over the years who've said, well, the church, you know, it's on the way out.

[ 34 : 33 ] I remember I went to Romania in 1999 and I went to a place called Aradia. In Aradia, there is a church, I'll tell you about in a moment, but down the road in Aradia was a factory where Ceausescu, who was the last communist dictator just two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall and then, of course, of the whole Soviet communist regime, stood and he said, you know, there's a church down the road there.

That will be closed before long. By the end of, in a couple of years, there will be no Christians in our country again. It will be absolutely finished. There's a church there now, every Sunday morning, 3,000 people meet.

It has its own seminary, Bible college, training ground and throughout Romania, churches are flourishing and growing. And again, we can be sucked into that a little bit, particularly if we're in a small fellowship.

We're not in a large fellowship here. We can say, well, look how we're getting a little bit older. Look how things are going. Is there really going to be a church here in 10 years' time? Yes, there is. Why is that going to be the case?

Because God has planned that we are to have hope and a future, a future with hope. You see, we live in a world, dear friends, don't we, where the men and women around about us have no hope.

[ 35 : 48 ] Paul reminds us that we were like them, without hope and without God in the world, Ephesians chapter 2. They especially have no hope concerning the future beyond death.

1 Thessalonians 4, 13, We're not to grieve like those who have no hope. The Christian is marked out as someone who has hope. It's not that hope which is crossed fingers, touch wood. If I catch any of you doing that again, I'm going to slap your wrists. No, we're Christians who have a hope which is bright, a future which is bright.

Because in Christ we have the promises of God that he will give us a future and a hope. This church has a future which is far better than the future that God promised the exiles in Babylon. He promised them and we know because we look back in history and know he kept that promise. Seventy years later, King Cyrus was appointed a king and emperor of the Persians and he issued a decree that all the people could go back and that they could go and build their temple and go and build the walls again.

[ 36 : 55 ] And they were there. But we have a future and a hope which is more certain, more lasting, more real, more eternal than that. We have a future and a hope which is tied up with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which is tied up with the fact that this world is not all there is to live for but there is an everlasting kingdom and an everlasting city and an everlasting home and an everlasting country and every moment that we go through life and every day that we go, God is fulfilling his plans to bring that day into fruition for us.

And nothing can stop it. So we live in hope. We live in hope and we pass on to our physical and to our spiritual descendants that hope as well.

That hope that Christ is building his church, that hope that there is a future for his people, that hope that Christ will come again and bring all things to fulfillment. Now I wonder if I could say a word to those of us who are a little older in years.

One of the things that can happen to us as we get older is we get grumpy. Somebody in the local paper even called himself a grumpy old man this week. I can't believe it.

[ 38 : 09 ] And we can become discouraged. We can look back on the past. Those of you I said this morning, those of you who have seen the church over these 42 years can look back and see times of particular blessing, particular encouragement, particular increase.

And you can say, oh, if we could only go back, we could have those days again. Sometimes as older Christians we can bemoan the days in which we live. We can be a bit grumpy.

We can be a bit negative. Let me encourage you, dear friends, and encourage myself, those of us who've lived a little while in the Christian life. Let us encourage the younger generation.

Let us say to them, God has a future for you which is filled with hope. Let us not look back, but let us look forward to what God has promised he will do. Let us encourage them to, as the exiles would have done and said, look, soon you're going to be in Judah.

Soon you're going to be in the Jerusalem. Soon you're going to come back as God has promised. Let us also promise that to our children. Let us also encourage them in the faith. Let us look to the future, not just to the past.

[ 39 : 16 ] Let us look to the future when God will fulfill his plans and promises for his people. And let's prepare ourselves and prepare others for that day. Surely that is ultimately the very core of what we're about.

We're preparing men and women for the return of Christ. We're saying to them a day is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will come as judge of the living and the dead. Therefore, repent of your sins and put your faith in him.

And dear Christian, live for him knowing that this world is not the world that you're going to be in for eternity, but you've got a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. And let us be sure, dear friends, as we live in exile in one sense in this wicked and hostile world, let us be sure and certain that we hold on to God's promises.

That we prepare ourselves for that day. We prepare our families for that day. We prepare our neighbors for that day. Do you notice what God says to them as they're living in the Babylonians? Those wicked and evil, idolatrous people. What does he say? Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. We're to be praying for and working for the blessing of Whitby.

[ 40 : 28 ] Those who are the Goths and those who object to the gospel and those who have no time for the things of Christ and those who are religious but have no power of the gospel. We're to be praying for them and we're to be praying for the Lord to prosper and bless this town in which he's blessed, in which he's placed us.

We're to have that hope for a future. That doesn't mean that we daydream away. Doesn't mean that we detract from living in society as we are today.

We're to live as those who give and who impact our community and our society today. But dear friends, when we have hope, then we have a purpose. Then we have, we are infused with reason. To live, to work with zeal and with faith, to press on. Just close with this thought. Imagine when they, if they ever do, build the HS2.

You know, the train line. They want to go from London to the north. Imagine that they tell you that they're going to put that train line right through your house and right through your village and everything's going to be lost.

[ 41 : 39 ] And there's going to be nothing. You wouldn't bother painting it, would you? You wouldn't bother touching up that bit of plaster work that's cracked. You wouldn't bother replacing that tile on the roof because you've got no hope and no future.

What's the point? We are living amongst people in this world who think, what's the point? There's nothing but emptiness at the end. There's nothing to live for. But we have a future.

We have a hope. So we keep on painting and we keep on plastering and we keep on replacing tiles and we keep on doing the things that God has called us to do because he has said, I have plans for you to prosper you, not to harm you.

Plans to give you a future and a hope. And so we carry on. 42 years? Just a blink of an eye, isn't it? 42 more years?

Who knows? 42 years? But we know this. Christ is coming again. And in the intervening time, the plans he has for us as people cannot fail, cannot fall.

[ 42 : 41 ] We cannot be lost because he has said it and we know who we've believed in. Let's sing together a wonderful hymn as we close our time this evening.

It's number 796. I'm not skilled to understand what God has willed, what God has planned, but the great heavenly biblical but.

But 796. Let's stand as we sing. I am not skilled to understand what God has will, what God has planned.

I only know at this right hand that one who is my Savior. I take him at his word and thee, Christ I will sing and this I read.

And in my heart, I find the need of him to be my Savior. And now to him who is able to do.

[ 44 : 33 ] Immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. According to his power that is at work within us. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.