



GOOD JOB

YOUR WORK MATTERS

Most of our life happens outside of church, and for many of us that means it happens at work. Some have careers in the workforce, others have work to do at home with family or volunteering in retirement. Your work matters to God. Your job can be glorious if you glorify God in your job.

GOOD JOB • Jeremiah 29:1–14 • Yemi Mobolade • February 9, 2020

I want to begin with the question, “What do a farmer, carpenter and city planner have in common?” They are the three main occupations of God. In Genesis 2, God planted a garden in Eden and gave growth to every tree. God the Farmer. In the New Testament, we find Jesus involved in his early father Joseph’s trade. In Mark 6 while He was teaching, the people were surprised and said, “Wait a minute, isn’t this the carpenter dude?” God the Carpenter. In Revelations 21, we get a glimpse of the city of God, the Holy City in heaven designed by God. Revelations 21 informs this city is designed well and full of brilliance. Hebrews 11 informs the architect and builder of this City is God. God the City Planner. So, if you are sitting in the room and you work as a farmer, carpenter or in city planning, congratulations. You are most like God! You can go home now.

You are in the middle of a fantastic new series to kick off the year called *Good Job*. Your work matters. This truth is foundational and core to the why of our very existence. Before there was sin, there was work. Before there was mention of sacrifice, there was work. Before the mention of worship or church, there was work. Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created.” Arguably the most important verse of all Scripture. The epic story that you and I belong to begins with our Creator God working, creating, producing, building and manufacturing. This thing you and I spend most of our week doing that we sometimes refer to as a “necessary evil” to get by or just survive, DOES NOT belong to the devil. The devil did not invent work; God did and it’s good work because God is good. And as the creation story unfolded, on the first day God worked and at the end of the day, He stepped back and looked at it and said, “Dang that’s good.” Let’s do it again. The next day equivalent of His Tuesday, He built a bunch more incredible things, stepped back again, and said, “Dang that’s so good.” Then he does it again and works and creates, and steps back and enjoys his work. Your work is good.

Before I continue, good morning! My name is Yemi Mobolade. I am honored to be with you today. My heartfelt thanks to Pastor Tim McConnell and Pastor Jennifer Holz and the rest of the First Pres team for the opportunity to unpack God’s Word with you. Being here this morning feels like a homecoming. Many of you in this room I consider friends and family. You played an important role in my personal spiritual development and launching me into my spiritual work in the city. My daughter was baptized in this church. When my wife Abbey and I first started attending First Pres, we had no kids. I feel honored to serve alongside Pastor Tim in the frontlines, as we shepherd the movement entrusted to us from the Lord called COSILoveYou. First Pres is part of it and leading the way. CityServe was birthed from this home. Starting in 2014 with 157 First Presers to last year (when) we had 4,100 from 66 churches serving in almost 200 locations north, south, east and west across the city in a single day. Amen! Pastor Tim has served as a leader and great champion of this cause. First Pres, I am proud of you. Keep up the good work.

Our primary text for the day is Jeremiah 29:1–14. If you brought your Bible, turn to the text or follow along on the screens. Stand with me as we hear God’s Word. The practice of standing when God’s Word is being read is an ancient practice that has been done for many years. It’s a posture of respect and receiving, for it is God’s Word to you and He is doing the speaking.

These are the words of the letter (Jeremiah 29:1–9) that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom

Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metal workers had departed from Jerusalem. The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It said: “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 and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; 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, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD.”

Let us pray: Lord, I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to unpack your Word. I feel so inadequate to deliver something of value about Your good news that is priceless. Be ever gracious to me. Give me confidence in the power of Your gospel. I pray the seed of Your word will not return to You empty-handed but will fall on good soil. Empower Your people to see clearly that we live in light of the gospel, declaring its truth with our words and embodying truth with our actions. Amen!

The City of God is a city at peace, whose gates are always open to all, a majestic throne. A city with many mansions, a life-giving river going through providing water for growth and sustenance. A city with incredible infrastructure made with finest materials, walls made of jasper and streets made of gold. A tree of life better than Eden. A city with no more curses, sickness, cancer or rheumatoid arthritis. A city where people of all races, ethnicities and languages assembled. A city with singing, joy, laughter and the abolishment of death. This is heaven, the City of God. God’s inhabitation.

This City is also our future home. In Matthew 25:34: “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” The Kingdom, City of God, Heaven, that has been prepared for you before the world was created. This is our future home, friends. That’s all well and good, but what about now? The reality, this is not the city we live in; our earthly cities are plagued with sin, brokenness, sadness, pain, sickness, grief and loss. The Kingdom of Heaven, City of God, prepared for us is far from today’s reality. Pain and suffering seems to be the norm. What you and I endure on earth is not right and not at all the way God designed it to be. Pain, suffering, sin, evil is not right.

Have you seen those Mint Mobile commercials? You have to watch this ([youtube.com/watch?v=bWObB9Hzkvg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWObB9Hzkvg)). Yep, not right. I love the look on that man’s face. How about this one ([youtube.com/watch?v=8LM32XqzqCo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LM32XqzqCo))? Nobody should ever, ever, ever, ever, ever drink chunky-style milk. That is definitely not right. So is sin. Sin is not right. Sin is the disruption of Shalom. Sin has taken what was beautiful and right about God’s created world and disrupted it. Sin has plagued our early cities. So what do we do about that now? Friends, I have good news for you. The attributes of the great City of God, our future home, are available to you and me today.

In the prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to pray; we call it the Lord's Prayer. He said when you pray, pray like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9–10 ESV).

The City of God is future but it also a city in the here and now and being built before our very eyes. Here's the best part: God has given the church the mission of building it, that you and I are in the business of advancing heaven on earth. "You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again" (Isaiah 58:12b (MSG)). That in our city, that is not right, plagued with sin, evil, crime, poverty, disappointments, stress, sadness, letdowns, you will be known as those who can fix anything, restore, rebuild, renovate and make the community livable again. When we do this well, it is more than simply making Colorado Springs a better city. While this is good, the true miracle is our work in our city reveals the Kingdom coming. We give a glimpse, a foretaste, we point to the Great City of God whose gates are open to all. A City filled with many mansions. A city with incredible infrastructure built with the finest materials. A city with no more curses, sickness, cancer or rheumatoid arthritis. A city with singing, joy and laughter.

This is the truth of Jeremiah 29. A letter from God to His people through the prophet Jeremiah. The ancient city of Babylon, and the most famous city of that period and with the most dominant military power, took God's people into exile. Physically removed 800 miles from their homeland against their will and forced to live in a foreign pagan city. Moreover, to ensure total annihilation of the Jewish culture, the people were to immerse themselves in the socio-economic fabric of this godless society for the next two generations. The Jews were to completely lose themselves and assimilate in this new city. So when they got there, they refused to assimilate or participate in the city. Many of them made their homes outside the city gates. Which made sense, right? After all, the Babylon was a city that was a godless city that was not right, plagued with evil and sin. There were prophets that affirmed their actions and behaviors, prophesying that in two years God will bring them back to their land. Then all heaven breaks loose and the Israelites received a shocking and disturbing letter from God through the Prophet Jeremiah. Not at all what they wanted to hear.

The letter from God describes to His people what their attitude and relationship is to be to the city. Three truths I want to leave you with: First, God sends us into the city. The letter in Jeremiah 29:1 begins with this address: "These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon." We are given the facts of history that this letter was being addressed to the ... people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Yet God makes an audacious claim in Jeremiah 29:4: "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon." Wait a minute, did God just claim credit that He was the reason that His people were in exile. You bet He did. And in case there were any questions, to be clear His people knew that, He says it again in Jeremiah 29:7: "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have sent you into exile." God is saying to His people, the pure fact of story is, King Nebuchadnezzar and his military forces took you into exile, against your own will into this city that is not right. But make no mistake about it, it is I, I used those forces. It is my doing and I have purposes behind them.

I am not sure about your feelings or attitude toward our city. Withdrawn, despised, indifferent or frustrated. Your story of how you landed in Colorado Springs or the economic or social factors that brought you here. Job, family, a promising relationship that did not work out. Perhaps you are waiting for the next opportunity to move or upgrade. Friends, God claims to be in control of your story and is saying to you this morning that He sent you to this city. And, make no mistake, it is His doing. Whatever the facts of the story or circumstance that got you there, He used those and He purposes behind them. Perhaps they are feelings about your place of work and you are currently checked out. Friends, God claims to be also in control of your story and He sent you there.

Second, seek the shalom of the city. "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7) The translation of the Hebrew word shalom in this text states seek the "peace and prosperity" of the city. Two English words used to describe the one Hebrew word shalom. And it still does not do justice to the full breadth of its meaning. No one English word can describe the entire lexical range of the Hebrew word shalom. Shalom, perhaps the most sacred Jewish values, means peace; it means harmony; it means prosperity, success, thriving, flourishing, all kinds of it, and in every sector. Prosperity in the social, economic flourishing, physical thriving and spiritual flourishing. For a city to have shalom, it means the citizens are happy, neighbors get along and helping each other. People in the community live with purpose. People serve each other, there is reconciliation and unity among diverse people. The churches of the city—Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, charismatic—are ONE.

For a city to have shalom, there is justice, great prosperity, commerce is thriving, people have money, no debt. People are physically well and healthy. There is total flourishing in every sector of life and society. God tells His people, actively seek all of this and more and pray for your city, pray for your community, pray for your neighborhood. Friends, prayer is so important because where there is no burden for the city, prayer creates a burden. When there is no love for the city, prayer creates a love. Prayer breaks our heart for the things that breaks God's heart. Prayer changes things.

Third and final, make investments in the city. God informs His people in Jeremiah 29:5-6: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease." First, God reminds us, it is He, not the facts of our story, who sent us to this city. He also commands us to work for the shalom, flourishing of the city. He sent us. But he doesn't leave it there. He tells what it looks like and how to do it. You see, we serve a practical God. Build houses, settle down, plant gardens and eat what they produce, marry and have kids, have grandkids, increase in number there; do not decrease. These are all long-term investment expressions. When God tells his people to build houses, there is rich imagery in this with the ancient Jewish culture. Building a house is something you do to participate in the culture you are living in. You build a house and organize your family in such a way that benefits the culture you are building a house in. You give your time, energy, talents and resources. The command here is to make long-term social and economic investments in the city.

Friends, I don't know how your life is structured in our city. Maybe

it's guarded, protected in such a way you are unaware of the needs of our city. Perhaps you are like me and just too tired and have nothing left to give. We go, go, go all day, been around people all day, and it is nice to escape into our safe haven. Friends, what is interesting is that God gave the command to make tangible long-term investments to a group of people who had nothing to give. Life was hard for them. Friends, the invitation to you this morning is to reorder your loves for the sake of our city.

Let me close with this story. I was fresh out of the week-long leadership development experience. This was the right of passage into becoming a part of the Colorado Springs Leadership Institute, a network of established leaders in the city trying to move it forward. Pastor Tim is a part of this group. Shortly after, I was participating in one of our monthly meetings and in a sidebar conversation with another leader, I excitedly brought up CityServe Day and the churches' recent impact in the city. You know we make a splash in the city providing hours of free labor, fixing things and making our community better. I was so excited to talk about the impact of the church in Colorado Springs and the difference we were making. This leader looks me straight in the eye with intensity and says, "Good, it's about time." Not the response I was expecting. I guess I am not sure what response I was hoping for, maybe a tad like "Atta boy! You go Colorado Springs churches!" But not that. You know, this leader, who is not a person of faith, was absolutely right. It is time for Colorado Springs churches. It is time that the First Pres family is blessing the city. And the city should expect that from us. After all, what is our faith for?

What is the object of our faith if not to heal the brokenhearted, bind up wounds, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again. We have this power in us when we come to Christ. Perhaps our coming to Christ is not the moment we arrived, but the beginning and our launching pad to do something great with power Christ inside us. Friends, what is your faith for? What is your faith for? There is an old hymn made popular by Billy Graham that we sing. The song is often connected to conversion and altar calls. However, when you learn the story behind the song, you soon learn that it stands as a call to step out and take great risk with your faith. As we sing it, I ask that you embrace these words as Christ's invitation for you to join Him in His mission to advance the glory of God in our city.

Song: "I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.

Let's close in prayer: Lord we hear your voice saying once again, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Our response is, "Here we are, send us." Lord we embrace our call again. The mission of the church is to advance heaven on earth. Send us Lord to be Light and Life for the City. We lay our comfort for the pearl of great cost. We count it as nothing for the sake of the cross. We pour on offering of our time, talents and treasures for our city. Consecrate us, and set us apart. You are the hope of the cities of the world. We lift high the cross. Send us Lord. Amen!

STUDY GUIDE

GOOD JOB • "For the City"

Jeremiah 29:1-14

UP: UP: Connect with God through Spending Time in His Word

Read aloud the passage for the week: Jeremiah 29:1-14. Allow a few moments to silently reflect on what you heard. Underline or note any words or phrases that seem meaningful.

- 1) Who is speaking in the first person in verses 4-14? What insights and questions come from this understanding?
- 2) Several theologians are beginning to note a felt "spiritual" exile period among Western believers. What do you think of this? Do you feel spiritually exiled in your context? Why or why not?
- 3) Why might this text be helpful for our church family to study together?

OUT: Connect With the World Around Us (Join God in His Mission)

One famous summation of God's call to his children is found in Micah 6:8: "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." The way the world defines terms like justice and mercy and humility are often incongruent with how God defines the same terms through His Word. In a similar way, the call in Jeremiah 29:7 to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city" brings up the question of "what is peace?" and "what is prosperity?" Process these two terms, peace and prosperity, identifying similarities and distinctions between how secular culture and Scripture define these terms. What is true peace? What is true prosperity?

- 5) Identify one or two cultural "hot topics." What does it mean to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city," specifically regarding the topic(s) you identified? With Scripture as your anchor, how do you see the Kingdom of God interacting with these areas of culture?
- 6) What other questions are brought to bear on your mind and heart that align with the theme this week?
- 7) How can you join God in seeking the welfare of Colorado Springs?

IN: Connect with Each Other

Ask the Lord to connect you with at least one other person this week to continue to process this passage of Scripture together in Christian community. Thank God for the way He gives us one another as a great gift, helping us to apply God's Word to our lives. Pray that Colorado Springs experiences in a profound way the goodness of the Lord!