



APPNOTES

Date: October 22-26, 2018

Series: For NEPA

Jeremiah 29:4-7 Do you ever feel that this world is not where you want to be? That you don't belong here? Truth is, if you're a Christ-follower, you don't. Someday we'll be with God in paradise. So why are we still here? Because the rest of the world is still here. We share this planet with 7 billion other people, and they need to hear the truth; they are created in God's image, and He loves them so much He sent His Son to die for them. The Israelites in exile were in a similar predicament. It wasn't where they were designed to be, and it certainly wasn't where they wanted to be, but Israel had a tremendous opportunity to share God with a country that needed to hear the truth. So do we. Northeast Pennsylvania needs to hear God's truth, and we have a prime opportunity to tell them.

Jeremiah 29:4-7 Humans are built for relationships. We create and tend relationships that come into our lives through work, hobbies, sports, and church. That's not wrong. But if Christians only spend time with other Christians in a "holy huddle", we're missing out on an opportunity to share God's truth with our community. Northeast Pennsylvania has roughly 1.3 million people. Many of those 1.3 million have never heard the truth of God. Whether you live in Nanticoke, Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, or Carbondale, some of those 1.3 million people live next door. They're reaching for relationship the same way you are, so why not extend that search to the people in your own community? Take the opportunities in your life – work, hobbies, or sports – to build relationships with the people around you. Expand your huddle.

Jeremiah 29:4-7 I can't imagine living in exile the way the Israelites did, as lower-class citizens in a foreign country. I wonder if I'd have hunkered down to simply survive. God called Israel to do more than just survive. He even called them to do more than build relationships in their new home. He called them to seek the peace and prosperity of the city. What does that look like for NEPA? Is there hardship, anxiety, and fear? Sometimes we hear the list of needs and feel overwhelmed. How can we ever make a dent in it? But each of us is not called to serve or give in every area of need. All of us are. What I mean is this: I'm not called to serve or give in every area, but as a church we are called to every area, every need. As a church we can reach many; who can you reach?

Matthew 5:13-16 During the blackouts of World War II, people in Britain covered windows and doorways with special blackout fabric so that German planes couldn't use the lights as targets on which to drop bombs. We're not in Britain; there's no need to hide our light. This world may sometimes treat churches and Christians as a target, but we need to stop thinking of ourselves that way. We are the light welcoming the weary traveler to a place of safety and warmth. Whether or not the world realizes it, we have what they're searching for. We need to stop hiding that light but let it shine brightly in the dark. Northeast Pennsylvania is a place of hills and valleys. God has called us to be the city on a hill, not the lights behind blackout curtains.

Matthew 5:13-16 Before the invention of electric lights, people went to bed when the sun went down. Candles were too precious to do much after dark. How different our lives have become with the invention of electricity. Work all day, do chores after dark; that leaves weekends free for leisure, like soccer games and trips. Focus a minute on the middle part of that sentence: we turn the lights on, so we can see to do chores after dark. Jesus tells us we are the light in the darkness, and when we do good works, our neighbors will see God. People don't need to hear what we stand against or experience what they see as intolerance. They need to know the love of God, and they'll see that and feel that through what we do when we let our light shine. We are the light of the world. We are the light of Northeast Pennsylvania.

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