



*Thus says the Lord...*

*"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile."*

Jeremiah 29:11-14 - NRSV

This week we have heard from state and federal sources that there are plans to reopen certain parts of our communal lives. Now, some of what we hear contradicts other parts, and we wonder who has the right of it. Only time will tell, of course, and we must be cautious and careful with our own actions to protect ourselves. We don't have to worry about that with our Lord.

In this passage from Jeremiah, God is speaking to all of those who are living in exile, away from all that they knew and still love. Much like us, don't you think? We are by ourselves, in our own spaces, and most of our normal interactions have been curtailed. No matter how good it is, a drive-by Birthday Celebration (even with presents and signs) isn't the same as having pizza and cake *in person* with one's friends...

God wants to reassure the people that, no matter how it looks, God has a plan – a plan to redeem, to give us "a future with hope." When we pray and call out to the Lord, God promises to hear. When we search for God, we will find God. The Lord **promises** that if we seek God with all our heart, God will let us find God, Godself.

Pat Marrin, a Roman Catholic cartoonist and devotional writer, says in today's *Pencil Preaching*, "The universal feeling of aloneness that human beings experience is the call to find God. Without God we are incomplete, carrying a God-shaped space within us like a spiritual homing instinct that will not rest until we find God." And God promises that the search will be successful.

In this continuing time of loneliness and alone-ness, when we feel at our wit's end, with our last nerve fraying around us, let us turn to the one thing that can fill our hearts – the love, peace, and rest we can find in God. No matter how scary we find this time, when we cry out "What's going to happen next????", let us take comfort in the fact that the answer isn't "Who knows?" The answer is, "God knows" and God's plans are "for [our] welfare and not for harm."

God loves you, the one reading this.

#### Prayer:

*Almighty God, whose Son had nowhere to lay his head: Grant that we who are now living alone may not be lonely in our solitude, but that, following in Jesus' steps, we may find fulfillment in loving you and our neighbors; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and God's righteousness; and all these things will be added unto you.

~the Rev. Charlotte Wells+