

Bible Study for Luke 18:35-43 and Jeremiah 29:7-13

Post this Bible Study someplace you'll see it frequently. You will get more out of this study if you read the verses and ponder the questions several times a day. You'll also get more out of them if you discuss them with others. Jesus says where two or three are gathered in his name, he is there in the midst of them. If your friends don't have this handout, get them to sign up for our newsletter at <http://www.LaJollaLutheranChurch.com>. They'll get the questions Monday about 2 p.m.

What are you doing this week because you're a Christian? What would you like help with?

Monday Jeremiah 29:7 (NRSV)

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.

Israel didn't want to be in captivity in Babylon. They were torn from their homes. They didn't know the language. They were in a culture with strange food and strange customs. But God gave them a clear choice: fight their circumstances and it will cost them or bless their captors and be blessed.

What are some ways you are seeking the welfare of your nation?

What are some ways you are seeking the welfare of your city?

What are some ways you are seeking the welfare of your profession?

What are some ways you are seeking the welfare of your family?

When you're in an unpleasant circumstance, do you seek the welfare of the people involved?

Tuesday Jeremiah 29:8-10 (NRSV)

For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the 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, says the LORD. For thus says the LORD: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

Not everyone who prophesies or preaches in God's name is telling you God's word. You have to be able to discern God's voice, so you know it when you hear it.

What helps you recognize God's voice?

How can you tell if a prophet is speaking the truth or not?

Jeremiah said Israel was in a 70-year time out. Nothing would change that. The people could fight their circumstances (and thereby harm themselves) or prosper by embracing their (undesired) destiny.

Your destiny is influenced (but not controlled) by the destinies of the groups you are part of: your nation, your city, your neighborhood, your occupation, your friends, your family.

What is your best guess about the status of America (from God's perspective) today?

Wednesday Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NRSV)

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.

This is a great verse to memorize, especially if you remember its context: that the people hearing it were not where they wanted to be, and they were told by God to stay there for 70 years. God

promised that those 70 years would be a blessing, if the people sought the welfare of their new situation.

When you are in uncomfortable situations, do you trust God's plans for you?

Thursday Luke 18:35-38 (NRSV)

As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Leonard Ravenhill has a great quote: The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized during the lifetime of the opportunity. Some opportunities open up just for seconds or minutes. If you don't seize them, they are gone. The passage from Jeremiah 29 is an example of an opportunity that lasted 70 years. The passage from Luke is an example of an opportunity that was available for two minutes or less. Jesus was walking by. The blind man had a very short window of time to get Jesus' attention. The blind man couldn't see, so he didn't know precisely when that window was. So he just started shouting.

What's an example of a time when you threw caution to the wind and "just started shouting" when an opportunity walked by?

What's an example of a time when you held back and missed the opportunity?

Which felt better? Which is most typical for you? Which do you want to be most typical?

Friday Luke 18:39 (NRSV)

Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

When the blind man started seizing his opportunity and calling for Jesus to help him, people sternly ordered him to stop. But he refused. He called out even more loudly. Don't be shut down by "those in front." For that matter, don't be shut down by those in the back, either!

When have people told you to quit doing something that you knew was good?

Did you cave in? Modify your action? Keep at it? Or increase what you were doing?

What do you do most often?

Saturday Luke 18:40-43 (NRSV)

Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

Jesus asked the blind man what he wanted, and he stated his request clearly.

Do you know what you want? How clear or vague are your resolutions and hopes for 2013?

When Jesus healed the man and restored his sight, he followed Jesus, glorifying God. This was not everyone's response; many people who were healed never returned to thank Jesus, let alone follow him. When you have one of your requests answered by God, what is your normal response?

What is one of your current requests to God? What do you need help with next week?

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