

THEME: LIFE ON THE FRONTLINE

## 2. The Frontline Commission.

Life on the frontline is different for all of us. It is mostly spent outside of church where we meet people. In a survey it found that 98% of the church spends 95% of their time on their frontlines in the world. So where are they for us? (and there may be several for us)

- Home, work or Day Centre
- School, college or the Hub
- Doctors, hospital or Care Home
- Gym, tennis club or watching football
- Pub, café or choir.

Last week “The Frontline Call” from Andrew was to heed Matthew’s great commission to “go and make disciples of all nations”, but being assured that Jesus would be with those early disciples as He is with us now. God wants to use our lives wherever we are.

When life is going relatively smoothly, knowing we are making a difference can feel great, but what about when the going gets rough, when we don’t feel in control, when simple survival is our most pressing concern?

How do we deal with that?

My own approach has been to compartmentalise things (common male reaction to life?!) Carry on in my own strength, do some easy things, keep quiet/ lay low in other areas, and finally try to ignore the “too difficult” things! This is not what God is asking of us – He wants all of our lives to be open to Him, to be used by Him, because He loves us, Jesus died for us, and He wants the best for us.

So, what does the Bible, His word of truth, say to us? Claire read from Jeremiah chapter 29, verses 4-14. Let’s look at it.

Some background – The Israelites had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon, they were living in exile, in a place they didn’t want to be, with people they didn’t want to be with. Jeremiah, who wrote the letter, had been left behind in Jerusalem, but offers some difficult advice:

- Build houses, settle down, plant gardens and eat what they produce
- Marry and have sons and daughters
- Increase in number

Not short term “fixes”, but lasting actions. No quick answers for their cries for help. What’s more Jeremiah then commands them to seek the peace and prosperity of Babylon (v7)

How would we respond if we received that letter? How would we feel?

The lie of the false prophets (v8) was that God would rescue them quickly. Yet God says that they will remain in exile for 70 years (v10), but this would have a purpose. He would prosper them and not harm them (v11)

In times of difficulty it is natural to hope that God will rescue us quickly. Sometimes He does, sometimes He doesn't. We can help each other to be hopeful when situations take a long time to change.

God's encouragement to us is to keep calling on Him and praying to Him and He will listen to us.

If we seek Him with all our hearts, we will find Him (v13)

He promised to the Israelites that they would eventually be brought back from exile to their home in Jerusalem.

So, what for us?

I'm very conscious that, as a Church, many people are in very difficult situations – we are an ageing church where some can't be "out there" making disciples of all nations and getting involved in all sorts of things, but Jeremiah said to the Israelites to seek the peace and prosperity of Babylon, so where you are, be Jesus to those around you and pray to Him for them.

Some are in places that they didn't expect and would really love God to rescue them out of the situation, but He is saying this is where I want you to be just now, but I have plans to prosper you, so for now stick in there and watch me work.

And finally, there are some who seem to have lost everything and almost feel like they are "in exile". Well for those God says: I know the plans I have for you ... plans to give you hope and a future.

Amen.