



Scriptural Background: Jer 29

"10 For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you...." Jer 29:10–11a

Today's text is near and dear to the theme of Lent as a whole. Although Jer 29:11 is frequently misquoted in order to say God always has pleasant, materially prosperous designs for us in this life, the context from its preceding verse shows this is hardly the case. Seventy years is a long time in relation to the human lifespan. It was longer than most people would have lived at the time of Jeremiah's writing. So, God is saying that the people will not experience deliverance until after most of them have died. Even at that point, the fullest completion of God's plan would not take place until centuries later in the ministry of Christ. What does all this mean? God often has seasons of prolonged hardship in store for us, and through this sojourning, He is accomplishing His eternal good purpose for us (2 Cor 4:16–18), "for He knows the plans He has for us." This redemptive approach to hardship, trial, and need is what we hope to cultivate through the season of Lent. By looking at Jesus' path to and through the cross, we realize God is infinitely wise at using the horrible suffering of this world to accomplish His good purpose forever.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, how we need Your eternal perspective. Help us neither to flee all suffering nor sadistically embrace it, but when and as You call to persevere through it "for the joy set before" us. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to fulfill Your promises to us, to let us know You are with us in suffering, and to bring us back to that for which we were made. In Him are all Your promises yes and amen. So in His Name we pray. Amen.