

ALL SAINTS' CATHEDRAL, KAMPALA

1st January 2018

Rev. Dr. Hannington Mutebi

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight O Lord my rock and redeemer (Ps. 19:14)

READING: Jeremiah 29:4-14

I: INTRODUCTION

- We thank and praise God for seeing us through 2017
- As we began 2017 people were anxious and many of us did not know what God had in store for us.
- Even as we enter this year 2018 we don't know what this year has in store for us.
- And still our God will be with us in many more other years to come despite all the challenges we have to encounter on the journey of life.
- People make plans, resolutions, and decisions as they cross over and enter a new year.
- in such plans, resolution and decisions people are looking forward to have victories over many obstacles of life.
- But as believers we must always learn to submit our resolutions and plans to God in prayers, prayers for your family, spouse, family, parents, nations, leaders.
- UNLOCKING FAMILY POTENTIAL FOR DIVINE DESTINY THROUGH PRAYER
- The word of God (the Bible) tells us how God led the people of Israel out of Egypt.
- He led them through the wilderness and provided for them every step of the way.
- But after a while, they began to forget about God and to take Him for granted.
- And because of that God punished them by having the Babylonians invade their land.
  - The Babylonians attacked
  - Destroyed the temple and
  - Deported large number of Israelites
  - Many people were killed
  - Families were separated - it was tough time for God's people.

- Each one's life journey can easily be related to the journey of the Children of Israel can continue to the promised land.

- While in captivity in Babylon in hard condition is the time when they wrote and sung Psalm 137.

" By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down and wept. We hung our harps on the willows. The songs we used to sing we cannot sing them anymore. The joy is not there. And to make matters worse, those who brought them in exile were asking them."

"Why they were not acting like they used to; why they were not singing like they used to? "

- like the children of Israel sometimes we hurt because we live in a fallen world and we suffer because of other people's sins and selfishness.

- Kisanja Hakuna mukyezo president promised Ugandans to the dot. We are still waiting.

- as we were excited with the Kisanja Akuna mukyezo, we expected to see improvement in the medical services, improvement in schools, e.t.c. Service delivery - instead from no where - constitution amendment.

- Despite the hurt, and suffering we encounter in this life there is always a better way to hundle such situations than to simply hang up our harps, sit down and cr.

- There is a better way than to simply settle for where we are.

- listen to the devil's lies.

- think it is not going to get any better.

- there is a better way to respond to situations than simply quit.

- that is what the devil wants

- But there is a better way to respond when things get tough and that's God's way.

II: JEREMIAH 29:4-14

- Chapter 29 contains a letter that Jeremiah wrote to the exiles.

- This letter contained instructions and guidance about how they were to conduct themselves during themselves during the exile.

- After some of the people who had been captured and taken to Babylon sat down and quit, God had the prophet Jeremiah write them a letter to remind them of a few things.

A. WHEN TIMES ARE HARD, KEEP ON LIVING AND PREPARE FOR THE LONG HAUL. JEREMIAH 29:4-6

- Haul means to force somebody to go where they don't want to go.

- in these verses of Jeremiah 29:4-6, God tells us that when times are hard we are to keep on living.

- He said to the children of Israel.

- I know things are tough

- I know you are frustrated

- I know you are discouraged

- I know you are depressed

- I know you are home sick

- I know you are missing your homes, you are missing the temple.

- I know you are missing your fellow countrymen who avoided the capture.

- the children thought that the captivity would be over quickly.

- in fact, there were some prophets who directly contradicted Jeremiah's prophesy by saying that the captivity would be short - we will see more of this as we continue.

- this is not the time to quit

- keep building houses and settle down

- keep planting gardens

- keep raising your families.

Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage - increase in numbers.

- He is telling them: "this is not going to be a short captivity.

- you are in it for a long time, make the best of it.

- when times are tough, instead of allowing our lives to come to a stand still.

- we must find our strength in God.

- and find our way to move forward.

- to continue to live a fruitful and vital life despite the circumstances of life.

**B. WHEN TIMES ARE HARD HELP THOSE WHO HURT YOU - Jeremiah 29:7**

- Pray for those in authority over you.

- God also instructed them to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which He carried them into exile."

- This was not easy to the children of Israel as it is not even easy in our time today.

- when someone has hurt you.

- when someone has cheated you.

- when someone has talked falsely about you, it is hard to want the best for them.

- the best could have been to call fire from heaven to consume them.

- the best could have been to sabotage them – you have seen and witnessed defiance campaign.

- the best could have been to create trouble, disruption and anarchy.

- But God wanted them to do the opposite – "Seek the peace and prosperity of that city and not only that but pray to the Lord for the city."

- here in Jeremiah, we find the first admonition in the Bible to pray for you enemies.

- this is the same message that Christ preached in the sermon on the mount.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy; but I tell you. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

#### C: WHEN TIMES ARE HARD DON'T BE LED ASTRAY. JEREMIAH 29:8-9

- "Don't be deceived."

- "Do not let prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to their dreams... they are prophesying to you in my name, I have not sent them..."

- The time Jeremiah wrote this letter to the exiles, there were false prophets who were prophesying against Jeremiah.

- They were misleading the people – telling them that the captivity would be short lived.

- One of the false prophet was SHEMAIAH the Neheremite 29:24

- Later on in this Chapter v25, we find that he tried to get Zephaniah to put Jeremiah in Stocks and Neck-irons.

- But God points out that Shemiah was a fake in and for his sins he would be severely punished 29:32

- We also need to be very careful because there are more people in our days who are set out to deceive us than there were in the days of Jeremiah.

#### D: WHEN TIMES ARE HARD LOOK TO THE FUTURE AND REMEMBER GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU 29:10-13

##### "GOD'S PLAN

- In these verses 10 – 13 God helps them to understand that He has got great plans for them.

- God tells them that after their time of exile, He will come to them and fulfill His gracious promise to bring them back to this place.

- God said "when 70 years are past, this suffering will pass"

- We must be encouraged to know that no desert time last forever.

- There is a better day coming.

- No test, no trial, no school lasts forever.

- 29:11 "I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord.."

o Plans to prosper you

o And not to harm you

- Plans
  - Plans to give you a hope and a future
- Then you will call upon me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and you will find me.
  - When you seek me with all your heart.
  - When we go through difficult time we may think that God has forgotten about us.
  - That He has abandoned us. But we should always remember that God has plans for us, for you.
  - Even in the most difficult times in our lives, we need to remember that God has plans for us.
  - The bible says that we were created by God and in His image He created us. He Created us and He loves us.
  - While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
  - God has great plans for you. Plans for your benefit, for your welfare. And for your good.
  - Don't quit before those plans and completed in your life.
  - Don't throw in your towel now.
  - Don't hang your boots, instead pull up your socks.
  - When times are hard, you may not understand what is going on, but you know the one who does.
  - Hang on tight to Him.

A story is told of a blind man with a seeing – eye – dog.

As they reached a junction, the dog stops the blind man.

The man wanted to go forward but he could not. He doesnot know what is happening.

He doesn't know if traffic is coming.

He doesn't know what dangers are around him. All he knows is that he has someone at his side who know that is going on.

One who can see what he cannot see, so he hangs on tighter to him.

Dr. Tony Evans

That is the way it is with God.

You may not see what dangers lie ahead, but God does.

You may not see what 2018 has in store for you but God does.

You may not know what weakness you have that need to be corrected but God does.

During those hard times, hang on tighter to the one you know, who knows it all.