

Can I get a Witness in our City?

Acts 1:8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Jeremiah 29 4-7

4 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But 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.

Have you ever played with playdough, I have never seen anyone take the dough out of the container sit it on the table and say, “Be something” or point to it and say, “vase, bowl, cup.”

You can speak and yell at the playdough, but until you actually do something to the dough, it will just sit there and eventually it will harden and get less valuable because no attention was given to it.

Too many of us are watching the news at night watching the stories about the violence and the school problems and the economic issues of our city and yelling at the tv as if that is supposed to make the situation change...we are pointing at the tv saying better schools....better economy...more jobs...less violence...and the problem is getting worse because transformation does not occur until action takes place.

Last week we began our three-part series on Acts 1:8. The much-known verse where Jesus gives the roll out plan for reaching the lost and making an impact in this world.

He promises they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this plan to spread the good news. They are to start in Jerusalem, that was the community they were in. Then move to Judea and Samaria. That is the region they were in. Then run to the ends of the earth spreading the good news wherever they went.

Last week we talked about our Jerusalem and the goal to be present and partners to our community. To listen and engage in the life of our community to accomplish our SKC Campus Vision: To see the life of our church resemble the life of those living in our 2- 5 mile radius or have a 15 min or less drive to our church. Today we push out further beyond our community to being witnesses in our Judea and Samaria, for us that is our city. Kansas City.

The passage I believe helps us to see our instructions on reaching our city is Jeremiah 29.

In Jeremiah 29 we have a letter written to God’s chosen people who have been placed in exile. They are upset at their surroundings. They are uncomfortable and guarded and pointing at all the problems

around them and wishing it was different when God sends a letter to them that says if you want it to be different, you are going to have to do something about it.

Many people know Jeremiah 29:11 when God says, 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'

But many miss the action needed to experience this promise. God does have a plan to build and renew His people, God has a plan for transformation, but we have to see our part in that plan. We can't get to Jeremiah 29:11 without going through verse 4-7 which lay out our part in transforming the city and seeing God's plan unfold.

God wants you to prosper, God wants to give us a bright future, God wants to transform our city, and the way he is going to accomplish that is through you.

There are three ways I believe this passage teaches us about transforming our city. Are you interested?

So how can we be a part of our city's transformation?

1. We transform our city when we realize we are here on purpose.

Jeremiah 29:4 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:"

In verse 4 God tells them I have placed you in exile. I can imagine they were blaming the Babylonians. That pagan country how dare they come in and raid our territory. Many blamed each other. You should have fought harder. Well, you should have watched better.

Some of us are blaming other people for where we are. As long as you make where you are a physical problem you can point to someone as the culprit. It's not until you realize that where you are, has a spiritual component and see that your growth and progress depend on you being here, will you be able to experience your full potential, will you be able to become what God has called you to do.

God puts an end to the blame game and says, "I have placed you here."

They are here on purpose. This is not an accident. This is not happenstance. This is a divine placement. In this particular case, they were placed here for their disobedience to God and their continual fall back to idol worship.

Whatever the case may be, they have to understand that this appointment is God ordained and they can complain about everything around them, or they can see God placed us here so what should we do about it.

You can complain about your job. You can complain about your relationship. You can complain about your financial situation, or you can approach God and ask Lord, I believe you have me here. How do you want me to handle this? What do you want me to do? Where do you want me to invest.

SKC, our address is 9500 Wornall Road, Kansas City, MO 64114. That tells us we are in a city, that is in a neighborhood at a particular corner. And all of that is on purpose. We are at 9500 Wornall Road, across the street is Burns and McDonnell which has over 4,000 employees that work in the buildings right across the street. We are in 64114 where over 23,000 people live and in the adjacent Johnson County zip code of 66206, there is another 10,000 people. Our church is in Kansas City where over 500,000 people live, and that's Kansas City proper.

Some of you were born here and are quick to stake your claim on being a Tiger or a Jayhawk.

Some of us are transplants and stake our claim of being Longhorns! Our jobs led us here. A relationship led us here. Life circumstances led us here.

Whatever the reason, we are here now, and the question we have to ask is why?

Why would God uproot me from a great job a new house and my hometown family to move me to Kansas City. Why would God take you from wherever you were and bring you here. Why did God have you be born and raised here and then keep you here. Or why is God not opening doors for you to leave and won't give you peace to move....and why now? Why am I at Colonial? Why did he lead me here? In the season I am here, what am I supposed to be doing? I'll tell you what and why...

To be the light of Christ in a hurting culture so that, the lost are found, the broken are made whole, the fatherless find hope, and our city, Kansas City Metro, is blessed!

It is not an accident that you are here in this season. It's not an accident that you are here hearing this message today. God has a plan for this City. God has a plan for Colonial in this City...and guess what...you are in it.

Many of us are like me last Saturday...my wife wakes up and she is excited about it being Saturday and she says I have so much I want to get done today. We are about to go out of town, and I need a new pair of shoes. I need to find some supplies to work in the yard. I have to find a gift for my friend. And I am like, that's awesome when will YOU be back... I mean we...this plan includes you.

That reminds me of the story of the Lone Ranger and Tonto, if you are under 40 look it up, the Lone Ranger, this old western cowboy hero, and his trusty sidekick, an Indian named Tonto, are standing on a hill and on the hill across from them is an army of Indians, and the Lone Ranger looks at Tonto and says, "What are we going to do Tonto?" and Tonto says, "What do you mean 'we' white man?"

If we expect to see our city transformed, we must realize that WE are here on purpose...Gods plan for this city includes you.

1-We transform our city when we realize that we are here on purpose.

2. We transform our city when we Invest for the long hall – Jeremiah 29:5-6

Jeremiah 29:5–6 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.

This is not a once-a-year concept. This is not a one-day sign-up sheet. This is calling the people to invest their life in making a difference.

We too often sign up but lack commitment. And then we look at the situation a year later and wonder why it's still the same...or maybe worse.

I like the way the verse is structured, because it gives some ideas on how to invest, then it takes it a step further.

Because you would think that building a house is enough of an investment, but God says I don't want you to just build a house. I want you to live in the house you build.

He says plant gardens. How easy is it to plant a garden? I can plant gardens all day long, but God says don't stop at planting, eat from the produce. That means you have to wait for it to grow, wait to see the product of your investment and not to be satisfied with planting seeds.

If you have an assignment, if God prompts you to join a ministry, if God leads you to invest your time in a person, an area, a child, don't just plant the seed, water it and nurture and watch it grow.

And you can't plant a seed and come back three months later and be frustrated that the seed didn't do what you wanted it to do.

You have to water it, pick the weeds out, and care for it. You have to be intentional about finding opportunities in our city to plant seeds and eat from the produce of the seed by supporting for the long haul. For instance,

The Kansas City star has a list of 46 Black owned businesses to support in our city.

(is it possible to have this as a link or QR code to show on the screen)

<https://www.kansascity.com/kc-city-guides/shop-local/article265263856.html>

Plant a seed and eat from it's produce.

The Shawnee Mission Post has a list of Hispanic Owned businesses to support in Johnson County.

Plant a seed and eat from it's produce.

(is it possible to have this as a link or QR code to show on the screen)

<https://shawneemissionpost.com/2021/10/07/latino-owned-businesses-johnson-county-133676/>

Colonial has about 25 organizations that we partner with in this city. We are being the light of Christ, we are planting gardens, we are in it for the long hall and plan to see the fruits of our labor.

We partner with Hope Center who invests in the people, particularly the youth, living on the east side of Kansas City Helping lives be transformed by the Gospel.

We partner with Avenue of Life as they mobilize the community to equip and empower low-income families to be self-sustaining and independent.

We have established a ministry, Freedom's Bridge where we partner with KCPD to eliminate Human trafficking in our city, and see victims safely removed and ministered to with the hope of new life.

We partner with House of Hope who provides residential treatment programs for hurting teenage girls, with the goal of family restoration. These girls in this program experience the transforming power of love through Christian counseling and education based on God's word.

We partner with Mission Southside as they serve people in need in South Johnson County by extending help and hope.

And on August 13th, next Sunday we are planning to go together, both campuses are set to serve at Mission Southside. We will meet there, hear about the ministry, and then spend time serving. Please register at: (Is it possible to have the QR code to sign-up go here?)

We partner with Healing House, Urban scholastic Center, Unite KC and others, why...to be the light of Christ in a hurting culture so that the lost are found, the broken are made whole, the fatherless find hope, and our city is blessed! And our city is blessed when we stay engaged for the long haul, when we find ways to walk along side these ministries and invest our time, love on people, share Christ as we journey with them.

You can find our local partners by going to our website, where you can learn more about what each of them do and see if God is leading you to plant a garden to eat from or build a house to live in with one of these organizations.

<https://colonialkc.gomethod.app/outreachpartners>

Then he says take wives and husbands and give your children to wives and husbands...

Don't just know the people, entangle your life with the people...don't just read about them in the paper...develop relationships with them. If you want to see a difference made it is going to take relationships that are made by people entangling themselves together so that we are not easily torn apart.

God has allowed us to develop a partnership with Palestine Missionary Baptist Church of Jesus Christ. Since we begin that relationship, we have done watch night service together, a service black churches have to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation coming into effect January 1, 1863, we have invited them to join us for our Good Friday service, we have had Chiefs watch parties together. We have had three small group classes done with Palestine where our people and the people of Palestine sit together

and work through tough conversations. We will have another small group with Palestine this Fall to continue to build that relationship. You can find that information on our groups page.

We have renewed our partnership with Holmes Garden with the new owner Estelle Lewis and just hosted a lunch and learn about the work She is doing with partners in the Holmes Garden community. She will have a center for after school tutoring, she will have classes available for parents to learn how to educate themselves in finances and life skills and opportunities and programs to help kids have their school cost covered so they can truly be anything they want to be. And Estelle came to the church a couple a weeks ago and said, Pastor Greg I need this church to partner with us so that we can see change, good change in our community, and I told her, Colonial is all in! Are we all in? That's what I thought.

And in order to do city work, you have to sit around the table with people who don't look like you and have tough conversations in the love of Christ for the sake of Christ and watch those relationships grow from shallow and surface to significant and substantial.

In order to do the work God is asking us to do in our church...in our neighborhood...in our city...it's going to take entangled relationships.

Ever seen that ball of Christmas lights you pull out of your garage after sitting in a box for a year? I don't know how it happens, but they are so entangled you can't simply pull them apart. You can't tell where one ends and the other begins because they are so linked together.

We need relationships made with entangled people, so that when the tough part of city work comes, we are so close we have to press through because we are entangled. An investment has been made so we have to work it out.

This is not an "are we there yet" opportunity. This is an "I'm here for the journey" opportunity.

You can't be like my sons on road trips every few miles ask are we there yet.

Their impatience causes them not to enjoy the trip because the whole way they want the results now.

When you are trying to invest in transforming a city, you can't ask are we there yet because you sent a check last month...you can't ask are we there yet because you planted flowers last year...you can't ask are we there yet because you read to one child one time.

When you are trying to invest in transforming a city you have to be willing to give years of your time, doing life with people, working consistently not asking are we there yet, but waiting on God to show you when you get there that you have served your purpose.

1-We transform our city when we realize we are here on purpose. 2-We transform our city when we determine to be involved for the long haul.

3. We transform our city when we realize our future is the city's future.

Jeremiah 29:7 But 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.

The message to the exiles was if you want to see prosperity you are going to have to make the city prosperous.

Our city wants to see authentic people who care, not people who put on a show to make it seem we care.

I probably wouldn't know good religious teaching from bad, or a great sermon from one that breaks every rule in the preaching manual. But I sure know nice people from jerks, and real people from hypocrites. I would stay at a church with lousy teaching but generally friendly people – people who got to know me and cared about me and respected my needs and boundaries – before I would stay at a place with perfect teaching and lousy people. – Former church goer thinking about returning – “Grow your church from the Outside” – George Barna

If you expect to have a bright future, you are going to have to participate in your city having a bright future.

If you expect this church...this neighborhood...this city to be a desirable place for people to come and fellowship...and see lives changed, you are going to have to participate.

That means if you see someone struggling...you can't just say poor youth ministry...you have to say that's my youth struggling...that's my children's ministry...that's my church...that's my neighbor... that's my city in crisis.

What does that mean...that means when we look on tv and read about a school district that is failing...we can't simply say poor district...because if it fails...we fail...we fail our children...we fail the college institutions that are waiting for them...we fail the job market who will be hiring them...we fail the police department that will be arresting them once they give up and decide they have no hope.

Then we will look around one day and see that what we once watched on tv and pointed at and talked about is now right next door...and then we will try to do something, but it will be too late.

You can't separate yourself from the life of the whole city. What goes on in your neighborhood affects everyone in every neighborhood.

What goes on in my neighborhood affects you.

When there is a problem with crime in the Kansas City, Mo, there is a problem in Lenexa. When there is an illiteracy problem in Lee's summit...there is a problem with illiteracy in Shawnee mission. When the divorce rate is up in Overland Park...there is a problem with divorce in Kansas City.

You see Later on in verse 11 God tells them I have a future for you, but in order to experience the joy of that future, they have to seek the prosperous future of the city around them. They have to cheer for the

home team no matter why they were there or where they came from. They had to root for the success of everyone in town.

Any Kansas City Royals fans in here...and Chiefs fans in here?

There is a reason they are not called the Lenexa Royals...there is a reason they are not called the Overland Park Chiefs...there is a reason the soccer team is not called Sporting Lee's Summit. There is a reason the women's soccer team is not called the Wyandotte Current...that is because they represent the whole metro Kansas City area. And they want everyone in town, regardless of where you live in town, to root for the success of the team, like it is your success.

But there is a greater team to be on...the owners name is God...and he has unlimited resources, so you never have to worry about being traded or asked to leave the team.

You have a coach named Jesus who loved his team so much that he died for his team...was buried for his team and got up with all power in his hand to lead his team.

And we have a teammate that is with us always called the Holy Spirit that gives us our plays...and orders our direction...and keeps us in contact with the coach and owner.

And because we are on that team, we can root for the success of God moving all over our city, because we are part of that team, we can dream for the bright future for everyone in our city, because we are on the same team, no matter where you are in this city, we can make a difference in our city. Because we are here: To be the light of Christ in a hurting culture, so that, the lost are found, the broken are made whole, the fatherless find hope, and our city is blessed!

And everyone on Team Church said Amen!