



**the
narrative
of
grace**

#4 Grace in Exile



The Narrative of Grace
“Grace in Exile”

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Matthew concludes his genealogy by saying something very interesting. After listing all of the names in the first 16 verses, he says in verse 17 that there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and their were fourteen generations from David to the deportation

to Babylon, and their were fourteen generations from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ.

That means that by the time we got to Jesus, there had been 42 generations since the promise given to Abraham. There had been 28 generations since the promise was given to David when the prophet Nathan told David that one of his descendants was going to reign and he would reign forever.

That is so long!

But if you look closely, a lot happens in each of these 14 generation gaps.

Abraham gets this promise at the beginning of the genealogy, that by his seed, the whole earth will be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3) but the problem is, that Abraham was not a King. He was not royalty. He was just a man. A man with a wife who couldn't have kids. There was no royalty in his family. And in fact that first stretch of 14 generations, they were really just common people.

Isaac was not a King. Jacob was not a King.

Jacob's son Joseph eventually was elevated to the second highest position in Egypt, and Pharaoh said to him “I have set you over all the land of

Egypt” (Genesis 41:41) which was as close as anyone had gotten, but Joseph is not the son of Jacob that the family line continued through.

Judah was.

We learned all about that story last week.

So I can only imagine this family, looking at their clocks as they look at their lives and they look at their families...

scratching their heads...

saying “Maybe Abraham was crazy. Maybe God didn’t speak to Him. How is our family ever going to have that kind of an impact, when we aren’t even a royal family?”

But when we get to David, something changes.

David, of course, was not born into royalty. He was a shepherd. Saul was King, and David played music for him. But he stepped up in many mighty ways really as being the servant leader who was willing to do anything.

But In one battle, all three of Sauls sons were killed, leaving no heir, and Saul fell on his own sword leaving no King and no heir to the throne. So the people thought, "David has led us well," so they appointed David, a man of no royal descent, to be king.

Suddenly with David, there was royalty in Jesus' genealogy.

And for the next 14 generations, it all began to make sense. Of course a King would come from this family line who would reign forever, “we are a family of Kings!”

Until something else happened.

And taught us a thing or two about what living as children of the one true King *actually* looks like.

What happened?

Israel was taken captive. The Israelites were brought into exile in the city of Babylon where they would remain for 70 years.

Suddenly the King was made a common man thrown into exile in a place he didn't want to be, without any say in the matter.

What a disappointment.

Where could God possibly be in this?

When his own family line was stripped of its glory. How was a king supposed to come from it that would reign forever, now?

Yet it was in Exile that God gave the Israelites one of the most quoted promises we have in the entire bible. And it was a promise of grace, and that is what we are going to study today.

So if you would, open your bibles to everyone's favorite verse, Jeremiah 29:11:

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

This is one of the most quoted verses in the entire bible. Everybody makes this verse their own.

They speak it over their life every time things get hard and suddenly the certain things begin to feel uncertain. They speak it over their friends every time someone feels like they are in a rut, or not where they should be, or not understanding why things are the way that they are in their life. So they say “I know the plans that I have for you...”

“maybe you don't understand your circumstances, but God has a plan, and its good.”

That is the idea. And it is true. You should speak Jeremiah 29:11 over your life, but you should speak Jeremiah 29:4-10 over your life too. And you should speak Jeremiah 29:12-14 over your life too.

Because one verse sandwiched in the middle of an amazing set of scriptures says something incredible, but everything that it is nestled between is your guide for how you get verse 11. It is how you actually see that hope and that future that God has laid out for you.

It is your guide for how you, as a citizen of Detroit but ultimately as a citizen of the city of God, can claim your inheritance as an heir of the King.

But it may be different than you think. Lets look at it.

Jeremiah 29:4-6:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 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 a very hard one to get your mind around. Think about it. There is no place that the Israelites want to be LESS than Babylon. It sounds awful, but most likely, there are no people that the Israelites wanted *dead* more than the Babylonians.

These people took everything from them. They took them away from their homes. The ones that made it into exile were the lucky ones, most of their family and friends had been killed. The Babylonians had destroyed their temple.

And thus sayeth the Lord build houses here? Make a home here? TAKE WIVES HERE? Give your children in marriage, HERE?

Multiply?

Do not decrease?

First of all, its easy to read this and read right past the first line because the rest of it seems so extreme. But the first line helps the rest of it all make sense. What does the Lord say?

“to all the exiles whom **I have sent** into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.”

You aren't just exiles.
You are ambassadors.

Do you guys remember why the bible says that God allowed them to be taken in captivity?

Because they had not obeyed the Sabbath years, and the Jubilee years.

I showed you guys this verse when we talked about the Sabbath, lets look at it quickly again: (2 Chronicles 36:18-21)

All the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, **until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.**

There is something very significant about the sabbath year.

You can read the command in Leviticus 25, and it says that for six years you shall sow your field, but the seventh shall be a solemn rest for the land. (Lev. 25:3-4)

and then it says that the sabbath of the land will provide for you during that time. It is a command not only to rest, but to trust God entirely with your

whole life, because if he didn't come through, you wouldn't eat. Israel for 70 cycles of Sabbath years never gave God a chance to show up. and those sabbaths accumulated.

The word "enjoyed" is the Hebrew word "*ratsah*" and it means "to satisfy a debt."

Israel owed God for all the years that they did not keep the Sabbath, so we like to say that He **allowed his *chosen people*** to be taken into Exile. Because that seems like the God we are comfortable with. A God that "may allow us to go through trials, but he would never actually put us through them."

But the word Jeremiah uses here that God says, is the word "sent." God says "I have sent them into Exile" and its the Hebrew word "*galah*" and it means to "uncover" or "to expose."

God exposed his chosen people to something very out of their comfort zone.

God basically dropped Israel off at Babylons doorstep, *naked*.

They arrived in Babylon the same way that they arrived on this earth when their mothers delivered them. With nothing.

when they got there, he spoke to them, saying, "you have nothing, except this:"

and told them exactly what to do. They had a new mission in this foreign place. And it was to make it home.

So he starts by saying "build houses." But he doesn't just say build houses. He says to live in them. Its different from Egypt. You aren't just building things for other people. Build your own home, *here*. Make a life, *here*.

Live amongst the people of Babylon.
Plant gardens, and eat from them.

Take wives and have children. Take wives for your sons. Give your daughters in marriage. Multiply there.

This was not a time for Israel to just bunker down, and wait out the hard times, God was commanding them to fully engulf themselves in the new lives that they now have.

Build Houses

We are trying to live this here in Detroit. I really felt strongly when we were moving here from Brooklyn, that we needed to live in the city, and that we needed to buy a house here.

Of course, I looked on the [realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com) mobile app and compared to the prices of things in New York, I thought to myself “This is going to be so easy!”

But of course we soon discovered that nothing in Detroit is actually easy... But we finally did get a house a couple of months ago. Its just a couple streets down Vernor... and its been quite a project. But again, we really feel like it is all kind of a piece in us making this neighborhood a better place for people to live. So we bought this house, and we started working on this house. And every time we fix one thing we open up another can of worms with another 5 problems, but when that house is done it is going to be really great.

Dawn’s dad came down from Lansing a couple of times to help us with some of the renovations and the first day he was down here, I remember I went out to get lunch for all of us and on my way back I couldn’t get onto my street. There were police cars everywhere and the road was blocked. We live on a one way, so I went back to Vernor, and I backed my car up the wrong way all the way to our house.

Of course, the neighbors were all out talking. Everyone in our neighborhood, they stand behind their fences and have conversations across their yards. And I was in my yard and neighbors on both sides of me were out and talking about what had happened and what was going on, and they said that someone had been shot and killed around the corner from us while he was sitting in his car.

We hadn't even moved in yet, and already were being welcomed to the neighborhood with fear.

Now, this may seem small compared to that, but then one day I came into our house, and I found a squirrel inside. I knew that there were some rodents in there because we found some chew marks and other things that signify a creature lives among you, but it didn't make me very happy at all. I waited until Zach got there and then he executed a brilliantly thought out plan by me to get the squirrel out of the house...

But then when Dawn and I moved in last week, of course, the first night I heard what is definitely a large rodent in the attic. I still hear him, every night. And I am scared to death to go up there.

And now, every time I flip on a light or open a door, I brace myself to see something that I don't want to see. I swing open doors and back up giving the potential critters a moment to run before it enters my line of sight so I don't have to deal with seeing it.

We had a mouse problem in Brooklyn, and we got very aggressive with trying to stop it, but something about what is happening in the house seems like this may be bigger than mice.

But its all just things that **don't make me feel at home, when I should feel at home.**

It is my home.

If there is anywhere I should feel safe, it should be inside the walls of my own home.

And I think for a lot of people in Detroit, home is a thing that they are having a very hard time finding.

Home is not a refuge. Home is not a haven.

And if someone comes into church, no matter who they are, or where they come from, and they don't feel at home, then how are we ever going to usher them into a relationship with Jesus?

If the people that you come in contact with every single day do not feel "at home" when they are with you, then how will we ever impact their lives? and if you don't impact their lives, then you won't impact the city, and if you don't impact the city, then *you* won't change."

That may sound drastic, but let me show you. It is in the very next verse of Jeremiah's letter.

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.**

I think that this is one of those lines that we skim right over because we just can't wait to get to verse 11. We can't wait for *our blessing*. We can't wait for God's plan for *our life*. And we skip right over the part that talks about *our* role in *His* plan for *their* life.

Because the way that *their* life turns out has a direct impact on your welfare.

And that is the way that it has always been.

and if you live a life separate from that, you may be comfortable for a season, but eventually, you will die.

The fastest way to find yourself miserable, unfulfilled, and alone is to live a life of indifference. The fastest way to void your own potential is to stop seeing it in others.

Because we were created to serve. We were created with this innate understanding that life is not just about us... we were created with these emotions and this adrenaline that kicks in and *thrives* when we are making

a difference in peoples lives, when we are making a difference in our community, and that is just the way it is supposed to be.

And that is the church. That is why we come to church. Ephesians 4:12 says that it is the job of the church to *equip the saints* for the work of the ministry, you come *here* to be *sent out there*. Hebrew 10:24-25 tells us that we must not neglect meeting together because we must constantly stir each other to *love* and *good works*, and gathering does that. That is why we have a church service. I hope that when you come to church, it feeds your soul, and it edifies you... but that is not the reason we come. Its not so we can be fed, it is so we can be *stirred*. So we can be stirred to go out there and love our city more. So we can be stirred out of our indifference, and reminded that the saving blood of Jesus came at a cost, and following him comes at a cost. Because for every good gift that you have ever been given, somewhere, *sometime before it got to you*, somebody paid for it.

Christmas is a prime example.

How many parents struggle in the months leading up to Christmas? Taking on a second job or extra shifts so that they can provide a Christmas that lives up to the expectation in their child's heart. But that child has no idea what it cost... what it actually meant to their mom and dad to be able to buy them that video game or that dollhouse or that bike.

But somewhere along the road from that dollhouse making it from the store to underneath that Christmas tree, someone worked very hard to pay the price.

Grace is that dollhouse under the Christmas tree on Christmas morning.

Grace is a meal for a person who is hungry.

But just because someone is hungry, does not mean that they will be fed.

In order for someone to eat, someone, somewhere has to provide the food for them to eat.

The Greek word for grace is the word *charis* and it means "unmerited favor"

It means you didn't work for the meal, but you get to eat it anyway.

But somebody did work for that meal.

Somebody did provide that meal.

And the best way that we as Christians can live the love of Christ out in our city, the best way that we can concern ourselves with the welfare of our city, the way that our lives most look like Jesus, is when we give our city, and the people of our city, what they *don't* deserve.

That is grace. That is how you concern yourself with the welfare of the city. You realize, "God is doing something here, and I am supposed to be a part of it."

The City

Being here is not always easy.

Detroit is an utter gamble. It is. Zach was telling me about how constantly in the early years of planting the church, with Pastor Chilly, people would approach them saying, "This church would do amazing in the suburbs. You would have thousands of people. We want to help you plant something in the suburbs."

Pastor Matthew in Los Angeles tells a similar story. When Pastor Tommy and Pastor Matthew wanted to start a church in Los Angeles, a lot of people were initially on board because they assumed the idea was "suburban Los Angeles" - but when people realized they meant "inner city Los Angeles," it took them years to get people even interested in what they were doing.

They had people tell them, move it outside the city, and we will give you "this much money and this many people..." whatever it was. There were promises. But God called them to the city, and they leaned on a promise that was not of this world and against all odds built one of the most

influential churches in the world in the heart of the city. It is called the Dream Center.

There are safer ways to have church than that.

There are safer ways to have church than the way that we are doing it. There are safer ways to have church than the many things we are looking to do in the coming years!

There are safer places to raise a family. There are easier paths to take.

But though this may be the path of most resistance it is also the path of most reward.

Because God loves the city... and here is why.

What happens in the city, spreads.

Culture is shaped by the city. It is the cultural center of the universe.

Everything that goes on in the city, infiltrates the surrounding areas.

There are more people in the city. There are more people who visit the city.

It is just a reality. As the city goes, so goes the rest of the world. As Detroit goes, so goes the rest of Michigan. A study released by the United Nations in 2014 concluded that by 2055 over 66 percent of the world's population will be living in cities.

That is why the disciples always went into the cities. They didn't go into the suburbs, they went to cities like Ephesus and Philippi and Rome. They went to cultural hubs.

and it is not because the suburbs are bad, but the reality is obvious. How do you reach the most people? You go where the most people are.

and what catches on in the city spreads to the suburbs. It spreads to the highways and the byways.

Loving the city for some is the easiest thing in the world, but for others it is a choice. It is a choice that says “I am committed to doing what it takes no matter what it may cost *me*... because my life is not about me. ”

and sometimes it is hard to make that choice, when you are laying in your bed on the first night in your new home and you hear gunshots simultaneously for 30 seconds long, with your head on your pillow in the dark looking up to your ceiling thinking “Is this what I signed up for?”

Because that was our first Saturday night in the neighborhood.

and it can be a hard choice to make, when you go to the mall with your kids hoping to buy a pair of pants for your birthday only to be forced out by police because someone decided they wanted to shoot someone else fifteen feet from where Santa was taking wishes from little kids for Christmas presents, and you wonder, “Is this what I signed up for?”

and decisions like that can be challenging when you are awoken from sleep in the middle of the night by the sirens and the bright lights of a fire truck, only to look out your window and see that your van was set on fire and it and everything in it was gone... only to have the fire department pat you on the back, and say “sorry about your van” before they drive away and you never hear from them again...

and I am not knocking the fire department, because it exists everywhere. But that response spoke to me about the condition of our city.

Are people so numb to destruction that they are satisfied saying “sorry it happened” and never seeing you again?

“Is this just the way that it is here?” Is it normal that around the corner from my house someone was shot when he was sitting in his car?

And they blocked the street for a couple of hours, and didn't let anybody through, but after not long, the road block went away, and the neighbors who stand behind their fences started talking about something else, and everything went back to life as normal, filled with conversations about

stupid politics, neighborhood gossip, and when the grand kids were coming back for a visit.

“Is this just the way that it is here?”

Because Jesus, his heart breaks for the man who was killed in his car around the corner. It breaks.

It breaks for everyone in France, and for everyone this week in San Bernardino. And all of those stories that we keep hearing over and over, and every time we hear them it makes us sick to our stomach, and we know it's just awful... and it even strikes a bit of new fear in us as it gets closer and closer to home but as the stories become so repetitive, and so familiar, and so common, they begin lose the power they once had to provoke us to change.

And we get used to hearing things like this and not truly be stirred by it.

But the things that we have gotten *used to*, Jesus died for, because the only way to mend a broken heart is take it on yourself. And Jesus had the most selfless solution for doing that, but because of what HE DID we have a heart that has the ability to relate to the pain of others.

Seriously, nothing will help someone who is hurting more than knowing that you genuinely care so much about them and their situation, that you it physically hurts you to see them hurt.

Do you want to see people healed, emotionally? Do you want to be their cure? This is it.

The word is empathy. It is “the ability to understand and *share* the feelings of another.”

It is essentially the opposite of numbness, which is something that our city has adopted as one of its core values, to ensure survival.

One of the big ideas here in Detroit is, “Unless you are numb to brokenness, you too will be broken.”

“These things are just to be expected...”

But Jesus took a different approach.

Psalm 147:3 says that “He heals the broken hearted and he binds up their wounds” because He was so sick of seeing other people in so much pain that he said “you know what? I will take that onto me.”

Paul put it this way, “To the weak, I became weak.” (1 Cor. 9:22)

But the moment that our hearts become so calloused towards evil that we accept it as normal is the moment that we have given our city away, right into the hands of the ones who want to keep it oppressed forever.

We need to take the lead on this.

Peoples lives matter. Their well being matters. Their family matters. Their homes matter.

When they lose those homes, it matters. It would matter to you if it happened to you, and it should matter to you when it happens to someone else. When people in our city lose their lives, it matters. It should utterly break your heart every time that you hear about it and it should compel you to *good works*, because together we can create a culture where those types of things are not common anymore, where perfect love abounds and is evident on every street corner because that *is* what we signed up for.

Let me tell you exactly what we signed up for.

Because until you know what you are in the middle of, you won't have a clue where to begin to seeking the welfare of a place like this.

We signed up to be a part of the City of God here in this City. A place that is truly on the inside, living on the inside, and growing on the inside that works night and day to see Jesus infiltrate this culture from the inside, out.

Detroit is the largest city in Michigan. We don't even realize the potential. We don't even realize the influence. Michigan has tried forever to distance itself from Detroit because of our reputation, but they keep coming back to us. We host all of their favorite sports teams. We host all of their favorite bands. We have the best shows. They come here to be entertained over and over again, and then when the event is over, they walk in groups of 15, all holding hands, in the safest neighborhood of downtown on the way back to their cars because of fear.

And I long for the day, and I pray for the day, and I am working for the day, when this city is a light once again to our entire state. That people come here for entertainment, and they come here for food, and they come here for Jesus. I long for a day when people who are feeling broken say, I need to get to Detroit... there is a light in Detroit.

I long for the day when this city is a light once again for our entire nation.

When this city is no longer known as the motor city, or even the comeback city, but "The City of Grace."

A place that got what it did *not deserve*.

A place that did come back, and that shines brighter than ever because a small light on Military Street caught fire and spread hope across a broken land.

When our second daughter Brooklyn was born, we were living in an uptown neighborhood in Manhattan, and God was doing something in our hearts in that season of our lives, He was shaping them and directing them toward cities... for families living in the city, trying to make ends meet while trying to raise children in small, over crowded apartments. And in one of those apartments Brooklyn was born, right there on the third floor at 452 Fort Washington Street, New York, NY.

and we looked at this child, our second child, and we gave her the name Brooklyn Jain.

Brooklyn means broken land, and Jain comes from the word *grace*.

And we decided to name her Brooklyn Jain because what we were saying is that **God is gracious in this broken land.**

He is gracious to have brought all of us to this broken land, to be a part of what he is doing here.

He is gracious that in a place where so many things are so broken, and so many things are so wrong, he is still right.

And when you get your heart around what God is doing in this broken land, you won't be able to help but want to be an agent of grace here. You won't be able to help seeking the welfare of this place.

and in *that*, you will find your welfare.

Jeremiah 29:8-10:

“For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your 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, declares the Lord. “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.”

What he is saying is that other people are going to claim to be prophets and they are going to say things that are contrary that to this word... do not listen to them.

People will come claiming to be prophets and they are going to have a more comfortable message for you than this one:

People will say, “don't stay in the city.”
“Separate yourself from the city.”

People will try and paint this picture of you being good, and the city being evil, and of a place that you must not get too close to because you do not want to be corrupted by... or you do not want to be hurt by...

people will say get out before you get tainted by the city...

These prophets will say this is not the time to multiply, this is the time to hang low, and wait out this exile, so you can go back to the comforts you deserve. The comforts that you should have when you begin to start your families.

They will say wealth, and exclusion, and superiority, and separation.

Don't listen to them!

God is saying through Jeremiah, the message that tries to separate you from the people I have placed you among is a *lie*.

Do not believe it. Your welfare can only be found in the welfare of the city. Seek that. Do whatever it will take on your end to see that happen.

And then we get to the end. To the part that everyone loves to quote, because this part is about *them*. This part is about *you*.

Jeremiah 29:11-14:

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.”

Grace in Exile

God tells his people that this is going to change their lives. He has a plan for their lives, and as much as they don't understand it, this is part of it. And he tells them when those 70 years are over... when their home land had finally rested, and when his people sought him with all of their hearts, he will restore them completely.

We have spent the majority of the year focused on Israel. On what they went through from Egypt to the promised land. We have learned week after week that time after time they cheated on God. They pursued their own stupid idols and constantly tried to make their own way. We learned about a people who went from grace to grace, taking advantage of it the entire time. Not appreciating it, every time... but when the Israelites got out of Exile, they came back different. The constant return to their other gods no longer existed.

They weren't perfect. But they were different people.

Because they experienced a different kind of grace. A grace that met them right where they are, and then taught them what it meant to live it in their city.

Because their welfare was wrapped up in the welfare of the city that were exiled in.

My Pastor once told me story that he had read, its from a book called "The Pilgrims Progress" It was written by Charles Monroe Sheldon, its not "A Pilgrims Progress" that John Bunyon wrote that we all know, but it was similar, in the way that it characterized Christian virtues and things that we should possess. and it told this story about a character called "commitment."

And commitment has a mission to go and make a difference in a city. But when he gets there, he discovers that it is a walled city and there is no way to get in.

But commitment had left his home, and he packed all of his things into his bag and he was traveling with all of his possessions, because he really felt, "I am suppose to go to this city."

But He can't get into the city!

There is a wall.

There is no door.

There is no gate.

He circles the city, looking for an entry point, and there is none.

And He looks around, and he realizes, “The only way that I am going to get into this city is if I scale the wall.”

So he looks at the wall, and he looks at his bag full of everything in his entire life that he had to his name, and he took this bag of everything, and he throws it *over* the wall.

and when the bag had cleared the wall, He was *committed*.

He could never get his stuff back if he didn't make it into that city.
He could never get his *life* back if he didn't make it into that city.

Commitment was all in.

and I think about that story, and I think about my life and everything that my family has been through and everything that has lead us to here, and I listen to all of you and your stories, and guys I know, Detroit is a hard city to be in if you haven't found your footing.

and its even harder if you are still carrying all the bags from your old place. You get to a wall, and trust me, I know, Detroit is full of walls.

and you look at your life, and you say “man, it was easier back there. It was easier, in the suburbs. It was easier when we lived in California and it felt like money grew on trees...” and so we hold on to these little things in our lives thinking about how we can get out of this place and back to whatever place we used to be...

But if we are always looking backwards, we will never be the change that is coming to this city.

This city will only change when people start taking those bags, and throwing them over that wall and saying, "I can never go back."

I can never go back to what I was. I was way too shaken by the gospel. I was too shaken by what God wants to do here.

And I want to see that same gospel that is living in me breath life into our city.

And that doesn't mean that everyone will live here forever. Israel was in Babylon 70 years, and they loved it. And some of them didn't even want to go home when they had the chance when it was over.

But if your stuff isn't over the wall yet, it is a lot more likely that you will be pushed out by your van being set on fire, or you will be pushed out by your street being closed because someone around the corner from you was murdered.

or maybe you will even be pushed out by a few squirrels running around your house. Because life is taxing as it is without all the added drama.

Detroit is a taxing place to live even without the added drama. I was talking to Emily a few weeks ago about how people seem to come and go pretty quick here, and she said "you have to be real strong to stay in Detroit for very long."

Are we strong enough for this?

Because God is saying, "you know what, I need *you* to care for this place, that I have entrusted you with." Build houses here. *Renovate* houses here. Raise families here. Concern yourself with the welfare *here* because in it lies your welfare.

And when this place turns around, so will you. Because there is grace in the exile. God is doing something in the exile.