

REFLECTIONS

October 9, 2005

...seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Jeremiah 29:7

A Note from Alfreda

Weeks have passed since we hugged and comforted a New Orleans evacuee named Alfreda Johnson. She called once to say thanks and to tell us she was okay, but this week we received a note from Alfreda. She is in San Francisco and has already begun her new job there. Her call and her note were to express her appreciation for the care that had been given her and the love she felt during her stay at our church. In her note she wrote, *"What a wonderful world this would be if everyone's life could be touched by someone as kind and caring as you."*

Alfreda was a lucky one for she had a job to go to, but many were not so fortunate. For weeks now, cities throughout the country have been receiving hurricane victims swept from their ravaged homes, their lives uprooted. As we think about the thousands of evacuees that have no homes to return to, and as they seek to rebuild their lives in the places they were taken, we might associate their plight with the Judeans that were taken away from Jerusalem as captives. I wonder how those individuals felt as families were separated never to return home, and how they felt when they saw their homes ravaged and their temple burned as they were herded like sheep to a distant land.

And then I wonder how the captives were received in the places they were taken.. The Babylonians were faced with receiving some reluctant immigrants from Judah. Foreigners were now inhabitants of their neighborhoods. God instructed the Judeans to reestablish their lives and seek prosperity of the cities, but I wonder how easy the Babylonians made it for them to do that. I wonder if they took the Judeans in and helped them to become productive citizens—to become a part of a prosperous place.

Throughout the land, our cities, communities and neighborhoods will be challenged by the question, how will we take them in? Jesus taught us to love our neighbor; and maybe we did when we gave comfort to Alfreda Johnson as she passed through our town and our lives. But what about those that stayed with us. I wonder if one day we will have reason to receive a note of appreciation from them?

"You are the light of the world,"

Richard +

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.