

## **Dads and Grads Sunday**

**Alida Ward**

**Jeremiah 29:11-14**

I was digging around in the trunk of the car the other day,  
looking for something that had rolled out of a grocery bag,  
and I found a real blast for the past -

I found a map, Fairfield County road map by Hagstrom,  
which we all used to have in our cars in case we got lost around here,  
in case we found ourselves on Rolling Ridge Duck Hill Lane  
when what we had really wanted was Duck Hill Rolling Farm Drive.  
Or whatever.

*Now*, of course, who needs a map?

You have a GPS in the car, or if you don't, there's one on your phone,  
or you just ask Siri.

Maps? How quaint.

On Friday, I was coming back from the Danbury area;  
and I'd told my phone to take me home,  
and so a cheerful female voice was chirping out directions from the passenger  
seat where I'd tossed her.

And as I headed onto Route 7, around the mall,  
her chipper voice said "there are significant delays ahead,  
would you like a different route."

Well, of course, I said,  
and immediately she said "turn left in fifty feet."

So, whoa, I did a rapid left turn across Route 7, a little scary,  
and then, I swear, it was like something out of *Into the Woods*.

I was on this *tiny* tree-lined road -- had to pull over when someone came the  
other way 'cause we couldn't both fit,

And the GPS lady kept hollering instructions.

Left onto Pickets Ridge Road she said,

Now Simpaug Turnpike --

And then Gallow's hill Road, say what?  
I was twisting and turning every few yards,  
I was driving by places I have never seen in three decades of living here,  
roads I didn't know existed, forests.  
And then I realized something. I realized I was really kind of enjoying this.  
I saw woods and fields and old houses I would never have seen.  
And I wasn't worried, because I knew -- somehow -- I was going to be taken to  
where I was supposed to be.  
I knew that somehow my little electronic friend in the passenger seat was  
going to get me home, as in fact she -- it -- did. Eventually.

And as I drove along, I believe it was, Lonetown Road,  
it occurred to me,  
it occurred to me that God is something like this.  
God is something like this.  
There are times when God says to us, hey, there's trouble ahead if you stick  
with the road you're on.  
Let me show you another way.  
Let me show a way you might not have thought of,  
to get you where you're supposed to be.  
Come on, let me take you on a road there might not be that many people on,  
but trust me, it's the right road. Trust me on this.  
Now I do realize that a God as GPS metaphor only goes so far.  
Driving in Boston a few years back,  
I was led so horribly astray by a GPS that I was convinced that it was trying to  
do me in --  
It took me the wrong way down one way streets in Back Bay,  
culminating in the moment when I found myself going in the exit only gate for  
the bus depot,  
Boston city buses bearing down on me, and me, I suddenly realized, with a  
giant Yankees #1 foam fingers in my back window.

So, yeah, the GPS metaphor has its limits.

But it remains true that God is the one who has a goal firmly in mind for us, who wants only what is good for each one of us.

And God is the voice that says "this road is rough going, I can find you another way."

And God is the one who says trust me, follow me, I'm going to get you there. I'm going to lead you there.

The passage Natalie read was from the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

And he was talking to folks who were heading into a future that wasn't entirely clear to them...

just like all of you graduates today,

just like anyone who's going from one place in life to another.

And Jeremiah told them what God had to say about that,

"I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord,

"and my plans are for your welfare, for your good, not for harm, to give you a future of hope.

When you call upon me, I will hear you."

My plans are for your welfare, says God, to give you a future of hope.

Which is to say, I've got a wonderful goal in mind for you,

I've got a place I want you to get to,

and that place is hope, that place is love, that place is peace.

That place is where you belong .

I want you to get you there.

My plans are for your good.

Whether you're a graduate heading off to something brand new,

or someone here heading into a new stage of life,

or simply any one of us not knowing exactly what lies ahead,

for all of us, one thing is pretty sure -- and that is that something will not go quite as expected.

There'll be some kind of challenge, there may be some kind of hurt,  
something may get in the way.

Those "significant delays on the road ahead."

And that's when you say, all right, God, show me another way.

That's when you say, God, get me around this,

lead me past it, take me on a road less traveled if you have to,  
just guide me past it. Take me home.

And God says -- that's what I'm here for.

There's a hymn that makes just that prayer,  
a hymn written a long time before the world of GPS.

It happens to be my father's favorite hymn,  
which of course makes it one of my favorites,  
and we're going to sing it in just a moment.

It says "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah."

I am weak, but thou art mighty, it says,  
lead me all my journey through.

It's a prayer for pilgrims on the way, which we all are,

it's a prayer for when life is changing from one place to a next,  
which for our graduates it is,

it's a prayer to remember that there is always another way through,  
another way home.

My plans for you are for your Good, says the Lord,  
to give you always a future of hope.

Let's stand and sing hymn number 622 --

guide me, O thou great Jehovah.