**BCM Bible Study – August 24/25, 2022**

**Jeremiah: Introduction (Jeremiah 1)**

Background

Jeremiah was a prophet to Judah, the southern kingdom of the nation of Israel, from approximately 627-586 BC. His ministry to Judah took place during what would end up being Judah’s last years before being overtaken by Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar. When God called Jeremiah, he was a young man, likely from a priestly line, who lived in a small town outside of Jerusalem. He was called to prophesy to Judah during the reign of its last good, God-honoring king (Josiah) and served for about 40 years. After Josiah, the kings of Judah refused to turn away from idolatry despite Jeremiah’s pleading – this failure to repent and ignore God’s law would lead to their downfall. It is important to note that Jeremiah is **not always chronological**; rather, Jeremiah wrote and compiled his prophecies together with his scribe Baruch.

Here are some important themes that you will see as we walk through Jeremiah:

* Jeremiah could be called the “persevering prophet” because his ministry is marked by ‘failure’ – Judah never heeded his prophecies. In this, we see God as the caller, equipper and sustainer of his servants. Also, we see ministerial ‘failure’ redefined. Success and failure are about obedience & disobedience, NOT about the response of others.
* God’s seriousness about sin, especially idolatry, is seen as is his sovereignty in upholding his covenant and seeing that it comes to fruition.
* God saves those who repent and turn to him. God determinedly pursues his people despite their continued unfaithfulness.
* God is also seen as the ultimate judge, king, and priest.

God Calls Jeremiah:

* Have you ever experienced a time when you sensed God calling you to something for which you felt unequipped? Why did you feel unequipped? How did you eventually respond?
* **Read Jeremiah 1:1-10**
  + What is God calling Jeremiah to do and what is his response?
  + How does God respond to Jeremiah’s fears?
    - Is God’s response what you would expect (especially in v. 7-8)? What comfort does God’s response offer to you (if any)?
  + Though God’s encouragement is addressed specifically to Jeremiah, we can find similar promises to all of God’s children elsewhere in Scripture: **Read Psalm 139:13-14** and **Luke 12:11-12**.
    - How do these promises/truths shape the way you think about and live out your faith? Be as specific as possible.
    - What promises of God have been most encouraging to you as you have followed him? Why do you think some truths are hard for us to believe/internalize? Which ones are hard for you to believe/internalize?
* **Read Jeremiah 1:11-16**
  + The illustration in v. 11-12 depends on a pun in the Hebrew. The almond (saqed) was an illusion to God’s watching over the fulfilment of his word (soqed).
    - Based on this encouragement from God and the previous encouragements, what do you think was Jeremiah’s fundamental mistake in the way he thought about his ministry?
    - “Jeremiah is not being called to judge the effectiveness of his work or the significance of his life. He is called to deliver God’s word; God will see to its effectiveness as well as to the vindication of Jeremiah’s life in ways he himself will never see.” (Dearman)
    - Why can it be so hard to trust God in the midst of answering his calling?
  + What do you learn about the message of Jeremiah’s prophecy in v. 13-16?
    - Why is God going to punish his people?
    - Do you struggle with this aspect of God’s character? Why or why not?
    - What is the relationship between God’s punishment and justice? How does this magnify the importance of the cross?
* **Read Jeremiah 1:17-19**
  + What about God’s calling on Jeremiah’s life is so difficult?
    - Is there something freeing in how God does not hide this from Jeremiah?
  + **Read Luke 21:15-19**
  + What parallels exist between Jeremiah’s call and how Jesus describes the call for us as Christians?
  + How do Jesus’ words in Luke or God’s encouragement in Jeremiah comfort you in stepping out to do what God asks of you?

**Conclusion:**

What do you think it looks like today to follow Jesus knowing that you will be unaccepted by the world?

Do you feel like you have already experienced this in some ways?

How can we encourage one another as believers and a community seeking to follow Jesus despite the world’s opposition?

Extra Notes

* Read 2 Kings 22-23 for more specific information about Josiah’s time as king
* Read 2 Kings 24:18-25:7 for more about Zedekiah as king
* What else is going on at the same time as Jeremiah?
  + 2 Kings 22-25:7 - The kings and political situation of Judah during the time Jeremiah writes
  + Lamentations - A book of poetry written by Jeremiah lamenting the devastation of Jerusalem
  + Ezekiel - Writings from the prophet Ezekiel who was among those exiled to Babylon, likely in the second exile (597 BC)
  + Daniel - Writings from the prophet Daniel who was among the front group exiled to Babylon (605 BC)
  + Habakkuk - A series of exchanges between Habakkuk and God that predicted how Babylon would devastate Judah in the coming years
  + Zephaniah - Writings of Zephaniah who primarily prophesied while Josiah was king

To help in the writing of this study, we’re using a commentary by Andrew Dearman. Any time you see a quote from him - that’s where it’s from! If you have interest in stopping by and reading/using it just talk to Nick!