**BCM Bible Study – October 12/13, 2022**

**Jeremiah: Wearing a Yoke, But Caring for the Oppressor (27-29)**

Jeremiah’s Yoke: **Read Jeremiah 27:1-11**

*Note that at this point in Jeremiah, the major exile to Babylon has taken place.*

* What symbolic lesson does God tell Jeremiah to employ and what is the message that goes along with that lesson?
  + Why does God use the imagery of a yoke?
  + How was this unique symbol supposed to define Judah’s behavior towards Babylon?
* Until this point, Jeremiah has not addressed any nations of the world. Why do you think God had Jeremiah deliver this message beyond the kingdoms of Israel/Judah?
  + “Jeremiah’s message in chapter 27 is that God has given a limited historical sovereignty to Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar… To oppose Babylon at this time is to oppose God’s will as Creator and Lord.”
  + What do you think are some areas where we see God working in the world currently?
* **Read Jeremiah 27:12-15**
  + God delivers the same message, this time specifically to Zedekiah. As the leader of Judah, why was God’s command to him particularly counter-intuitive?
  + We are not world leaders, but we can empathize with King Zedekiah’s struggle. What are some of the competing desires that battle with God’s will as the primary voice in your life?
    - **Read Romans 7:14-25** We’re not the only ones who have this experience - Paul mentions it here as well! What are some methods to help us ensure that we are not simply listening to voices that would encourage our sinful behaviors, but instead seeking the Lord?
* **Read Jeremiah 27:16-22**
  + Now God is speaking to the people and there is a focus on the “articles” of temple treasures. Based on what you have learned about the Judaens (think chapter 7 and ritualistic worship), why is this the focus of God’s message to them?
  + *“The importance of the loss of these treasures cannot be overestimated for the people of Judah. Their whole understanding of themselves was bound up with these things. The temple and its trappings had indeed been given to them by God. But if they had become themselves the object of their hope (cf. 7:4), then they would have to be taken from them.”* (New Bible Commentary)
  + Have you been through a time where God removed something from your life that seemed like it was foundational to your very identity?
  + Look again at verse 22. What is the Lord’s heart in all of these actions?
  + What are some ways that we can practice an attitude of surrender and openness to moments of God’s renewal like this in our own lives?

Broken Yoke: **Read Jeremiah 28 (all)**

* What symbolic lesson does Hananiah employ and what is he trying to convey by it?
* Hananiah’s message obviously contradicts Jeremiah’s. What is Jeremiah’s response?
  + How do you understand Jeremiah’s response to Hananiah’s prophecy?
  + “Jeremiah’s encounter with Hananiah in the temple symbolizes their differing viewpoints on what it means that God dwells in the midst of his people. Hananiah seems to think that God’s presence means that God’s defense of the house and the people is always near at hand.” (Dearman)
  + What does all of this show you about Jeremiah’s heart? In what ways does this align with God’s heart?
* How does this passage powerfully highlight the importance of speaking truth and handling God’s word rightly?
  + In what areas do you believe this to be particularly difficult in our society?
  + Remember that Jeremiah wouldn’t live to be “proven right.” The exile would be 70 years later. How should we adjust how we speak truth to our unique calling(s) and context(s)?

Caring for the Oppressor

Before reading Jeremiah 29, what famous verse to do you know in this chapter? Ask someone to quote it. Now, **Read Jeremiah 29:1-14**.

* Why are verses 5-7 so surprising, given what we know about Babylon and their relationship with Judah?
  + The Hebrew word for “prosper” in verse 7 is *shalom*, which “covers all aspects of peace and plenty.” (ESV Study Bible). The same concept appears in Jesus’ words in the New Testament: **Read John 14:27**.
    - How does this understanding deepen the way you read verse 7?
  + Think of a place where you have lived/live that you would call a “godless” city or one that you feel is opposed to the way of God. What do you think it looks like to seek the *shalom* of the city? What does it not look like?
    - Why is it so important that Christians take interest in the affairs of the city and not withdraw from society? (Consider **1 Peter 2:11-13**)
  + How are the commands to pray for Babylon (v. 7) and Jesus saying to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44) connected?
  + What are ways that we can pray like this today?
    - “As Judeans pray for the welfare of the city, God’s people will learn that no one is only an enemy.” (Dearman)
* Knowing the context of Jeremiah, how is Jeremiah 29:11-14 often misread? What would it look like for us to appropriately read it and apply it to our lives?
  + Nick’s thoughts: *Often when someone mentions these verses, the focus is on themselves and how they hope that God would never allow anything bad to happen to them. In part, this fails to acknowledge the verses immediately around them and how there would still be 70 years of exile (approximately a generation). The hope for the Judeans was later – and through seeking the Lord. Like the Judeans, our hope of goodness is not ultimately in this world, but is rather in eternity spent with Jesus.* **Read 1 Corinthians 15:17-19.**
    - How should this change that way you interact with and encounter hardship in this life?
  + Though our situation is not that of the Babylonian exile, we are still called “sojourners and exiles.” (1 Pet. 2:11) **Read Philippians 3:20-21.** 
    - How should this shape the way you view your place with society?
    - Because we can identity ourselves with the situation in Judah in this way, what hope do these verses and Jeremiah 29:11-14 offer to all believers?