**BCM Bible Study – November 16/17, 2022 [Jer 40-45]**

**Jeremiah: Back to Egypt**

A Dashed Hope of Renewal

* *These chapters are written around 587 BC when Zedekiah is blinded and captured for his rebellion against Babylon. The city is brought to ruins and Gedaliah is established by Nebuchadnezzar as Judah’s governor. Gedaliah is known to be sympathetic to Jeremiah’s message of submission to Babylon and is placed as ruler at Mizpah, not at the rebellious Jerusalem. Jeremiah is given the chance to go to Babylon or stay in the ruins of Jerusalem, and he decides to stay.* **Read Jeremiah 40:7-12**
  + What does Gedaliah tell the Judeans to do? Where have you heard this type of language before? (Look at Jer. 29:4-7)
  + While this command was given specifically to Jews during the exile, that does not mean that it should be ignored by us. What principles are revealed from this similar command? How can we live it out today?
* **Read Jeremiah 40:13-41:8** *Ishmael goes on to take the people captive and tries to take them to the Ammonite territory. Before he can succeed, Johanan catches him, so Ishmael and his men must escape back to Baalis without the captives.* **Read Jeremiah 41:16-18.**
  + Why does it seem that the king of Ammon desired to kill Gedaliah? (Hint: 41:2-3, resistance to Babylonian rule)
  + Why is this such a great evil? (see Jer. 27:1-3, 8-11)
    - In what way is this a lack of faith on Ishmael’s part?
  + “Gedaliah, the one figure who may have facilitated reconstruction of life in the land and become a symbol of hope, is senselessly killed. God will, of course, be able to overcome these bitter ashes of defeat, but it comes at considerable cost.” (Dearman)
  + At the end of the chapter, what does Johanan decide to do with the people? Why does he do this?
    - In what way is this a similar display of lacking faith? What fear is driving him?
* This is contrasted by the men coming to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles who are killed by Ismael.
  + **Read Leviticus 23:29-44.** *These flimsy booths are a reminder to Israel that they once dwelled in temporary shelters during the forty years in the Wilderness, totally dependent on the Lord. God is faithful and He continues to provide all we need to walk upright before Him still today.* (https://feast.icej.org/about)
  + Why is the attempted celebration of this feast such a stark contrast to the rest of the passage? (Both the unfaithful leaders and the unrealized hope)
    - Where do you tend to look for a sense of security and provision in this world?
    - Why does it seem easier to trust in these things?
    - What would more full dependence on God look like for you? What steps can you take to live more dependently on God?

Don’t Go to Egypt: **Read Jeremiah 42:1-17, 43:1-13**

* Where is Johanan and what is he doing when he asks Jeremiah to pray?
  + What does this tell you about the authenticity of his request?
  + Consider this: *“They really didn’t want either his prayers or God’s plans, they wanted the LORD to approve what they had already decided to do.”* (Warren Wiersbe)
    - How does this quote resonate with you? Do you do this?
    - What life plans do you hold tightly? What would be difficult about having these plans changed?
  + Leaders and different people within Israel have repeatedly asked for God’s wisdom/advice and willingly chosen to ignore it or respond disobediently. What’s that reveal about human nature?
* Consider 42:6 again. Often the situations that look “bad” in the moment are ultimately God’s design for our ultimate good. On the contrary, sometimes the things that seem “good” in the moment will not end in our ultimate good.
  + What examples have you seen of this truth already in your life?
  + How does this story encourage you to encounter difficult life stages or situations?

Going Backwards: **Read Jeremiah 44:1-14** Pause here and ask someone to give a summary of these verses – what has been said so far? Now, **Read Jeremiah 44:15-30.**

* What were the Judeans doing that was so abominable in the sight of the God?
* Why do the Judeans say that they continue to worship these gods?
* Why is it particularly tragic and ironic that people are turning back to gods in *Egypt*?
  + ESV Study Bible footnote on 44:26: “These Judeans have reversed salvation history by returning to **Egypt** and her gods. So, God will take back the **name** he revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:14; 6:2-3) and the saving, covenantal presence his name symbolizes.”
  + What pre-salvation practices or activities do you run to when you are looking for things to go well? In other words, where are you looking for satisfaction or security in the sinful activities that characterized your life before you knew Jesus?
  + This mistake is in essence the same one that tripped up the Judeans. What causes us to fall into this trap? (one answer – not learning from the past)
    - Read: “The whole Egyptian escapade was under his wrath because it was an attempt at self–salvation.” (New Bible Commentary)
    - In what way are some of the aforementioned actions an attempt (intended or not) at self-salvation?

God’s Encouragement to Baruch: **Read Jeremiah 45**

*While the whole book of Jeremiah has consistently been inconsistent with its chronological ordering, this brief interlude addressed specifically to Baruch seems especially out of place. This is added to by the fact that it is the only place where we see such direct communication between God and Baruch.*

* How does this passage add to what we’ve already read today?
* What encouragement does this focus from God on a seemingly minor character offer you?
  + “None of [His] saints, however, lacked the attention of God, who remained faithful to them in times of upheaval. This did not cause their pain to go away. Their lives were gifts in service to the Lord in and through the difficulties. And through their difficulties God formed disciples.” (Dearman)
  + Unfortunately, suffering can be a consistently present reality in the lives of faithful followers of Jesus. What comfort and encouragement do you find from the stories’ of others’ in the Bible on this?