

The Prophetic Imagination

Hope in the Land of Doom

SERMON SUMMARY

God's message through the Weeping Prophet speaks to us today as people living in a kind of exile in this world. Followers of Jesus live with intention and hope, knowing God's plans and heart are to bless us forever."

KEY VERSES

Jeremiah 29:11-14

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. "Everyone is always either in the middle of a crisis, coming out of a crisis, or about to head into another crisis". While this may be small comfort, it is an accurate definition of what life is like. How can you stay focused and calm no matter what 'crisis-phase' you are in?
2. What are the things in this world that we are tempted to put our hope in? How much control do we have over those things?
3. Rob talked about the danger of 'cynicism', or a prevailing attitude of pessimism and despair that can destroy our faith and hope. Share how you are tempted to be cynical. What thoughts tend to take root in you that need to be countered with truth?
4. How is 'turning inward' not helpful when we face struggles in life? What does it mean instead to turn 'outward and upward'?
5. In Jer. 29:11, the word for "Prosper" is the Hebrew word "Shalom". What is a worldly definition of prosperity? How is 'a deep abiding sense of God's peace and wholeness' better than worldly prosperity?
6. What do you think of the idea that we should "do the things that hopeful people do" wherever God has put us in this world? What are things we can 'do hopefully' besides the ones listed in Jeremiah 29 (houses, gardens, families)?
7. God is good and His faithful love endures forever. How can focusing on God's goodness strengthen and encourage us in our exile or crisis?

PRAYER EXERCISE

Read prayerfully through Lamentations 3:19-26, written by Jeremiah, in one of the saddest books of the whole Bible. While most of the book is a lament for all of the loss and death and destruction that was experienced by the Israelites, this passage in the center of the book is a beacon of hope that focuses on God who is faithful even when we are not. These words have inspired countless hymns and worship songs. Read through them thoughtfully and prayerfully together.