**BCM Bible Study – October 18/19, 2017**

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

Jeremiah’s Yoke: **Read Jeremiah 27:1-10**

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

* What object lesson does God tell Jeremiah to employ? What is the message that goes along with that object lesson?
	+ Why does God use the imagery of a yoke? In what way was this unique symbol supposed to define Judah’s behavior towards Babylon?
* Who is the audience for this part of the message in particular? (Answer: The nations)
	+ Do you often think of how God is working globally for his purposes? How so?
	+ In the midst of the current global turmoil, how does this passage strike you? Does it give you a sense of peace? Why or why not?
* **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? How would most world leaders act in this situation?
	+ 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 Jeremiah 27:16-22**
	+ Now God is speaking to the people and there is a focus on the “vessels” 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?
	+ Read: *“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? What greater good have you seen come from that time?
		- What are some things that get easily tangle up with your identity? What does it look like to identify and root them out?
	+ Look again at verse 22. What is the Lord’s heart in all of this?

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

* What object 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? (6-10)
	+ Is it interesting to you that Jeremiah is hopeful that Hananiah’s prophecy (which he knows is false) would come true? How does this sit with you?
	+ 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. In what way does Jeremiah’s example give you courage to be truthful in the face of sure adversity?

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 word for “welfare” 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 **Genesis 12:1-3** and **1 Peter 2:11-13**)
		- Why is this sometimes difficult for you to do?
* Knowing the context of Jeremiah, how is Jeremiah 29:11-14 often misread? How ought we to read it?
	+ Scott’s thoughts: *These verses are often read with a sense of hope that God will give us the perfect life that we desire now. But notice in verse 17, God says that there is ‘sword, famine, and pestilence’ still to come. The hope for the Judeans was later – many of them would die during the 70 years of exile. 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?

Conclusion

To discuss in small groups:

* In what ways are you currently feeling the burden of loving the city? Where do you do think that God wants you, with your gifts and talents, to serve the city?
* In what area of your life do you really need to embody the hope of Philippians 3:20-21? Talk with your group about your burdens and thoughts and let them pray for you.