

PILGRIM HOME CHURCH

The smaller groups in our church community are inside our homes where we go deeper, build friendships, and walk out the Christian life with each other.

HOME CHURCH GUIDE

- + “Breaking the Ice” question (group facilitator)
- + **CHECK-INS:** Introduce, check-in
- + **CARE:** Needs in the group
- + **COMPASSION:** What is the group planning? Are you inviting your neighbors to join in?
- + **GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS** Church-wide, group-only
- + **DIG IN:** Discuss questions as a group
- + **END AND HOMEWORK:** Final questions, prayer huddles for personal requests. Consider breaking into small groups (huddles) of 2-4, by gender, if large enough.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

NOTE—these are a guide. If there is good conversation, pursue that discussion!

1. When in life have you felt numb to emotion? Was it a short season or long?
2. Do you think the church talks enough about negative experiences and emotions?
3. How do we hold prophetic judgment and hope together? What does that look like?
4. Read Jeremiah 4:5-30 as a group. What strikes you in these verses and why?
5. Talk about this quote: “This tradition of biblical faith knows that anguish is the door to historical existence that embrace of ending permits beginnings. Naturally, Kings (the party) think the door of anguish must not be opened, for it dismantles fraudulent kings (and parties). Kings know intuitively that the deception, the phony claims of prosperity, oppression, and state religion will collapse when the air of covenant hits them. The riddle and insight of Biblical faith is the awareness that only anguish leads to life, only grieving leads to joy, and only embraced endings permit new beginnings” (56).
6. Numbness of a people is part of the controlling work of some governments and the result of ideologies. Where do you see this at play?
7. How can we encourage people to properly grieve injustice, personal sin, and the brokenness of the world? What happens if we pretend all is well when it might not be?
8. What losses to you need to grieve?

PRAYER REQUESTS:

February 24, 2019

PILGRIM  CHURCH

JEREMIAH SERIES

BREAD & CIRCUSES

NUMBNESS OF OUR IMPERIAL TIMES

OPENING: A bit of Roman history: Bread and Circuses

Jeremiah 4

CHILDREN OF A ROYAL TOTALISM

Totalism is what fallen sinful powers do - their ideologies and claims about what is real and true try to take up all the social space.

Royal totalism is the ultimate claim that the powers of the world-governments (AKA “king” and “the party”), culture makers, our ethnic identities, and so forth put on us. These claims tend to be absolute and deny us the ability to think or imagine beyond them. This totalism promises a little freedom for larger control.

THE PROPHETIC VOICE/IMAGINATION

The Prophetic in Israel is not first about justice, etc. but about giving voice to the Spirit of God. That God is a real character and an alive agent in the world. The narratives, stories, songs, and poems of the Bible fund or energize the prophetic voice.

How can we have enough freedom to imagine and speak about a real newness in our situation (39)?

- + We cannot start with whether it's realistic, politically practical, or economically possible. We've been too brainwashed by the powers that they have the only solution that works, which is the present one.
- + We ask if we can imagine a different world? Or have we been so co-opted by the "as-is" of royal totalism that we no longer have the courage or power to think an alternative thought?

Prophets in ancient Israel engage in what we might call "futuring."

"Our culture is competent to implement almost anything and to imagine almost nothing...imagination is a danger [to the royal/party consciousness]. Thus every totalitarian regime is frightened of the artist. It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing futures alternative to the single the king want to urge as the only thinkable one"(40).

NUMBNESS

"The royal consciousness/totalism leads people to numbness, especially to numbness about death. It is the task of prophetic ministry and imagination to bring people to engage their experiences of suffering to death."

To cut through numbness the prophet has parts according to Brueggemann:

- + 1. To offer symbols
- + 2. To bring to public expression those very fears and terrors
- + To speak in metaphors, but concretely about the real deathliness that hovers over us and gnaws within us

Proper language or idiom is that of grief

- + Grief, mourning pathos is the ultimate form of criticism... it exposes all the lies of our royal distractions and entertainment to death.

Jeremiah is prophetically working to do all three functions.

- + 4:19-20, 23-26 He grieves and declares words that are to break through the numbness of the people.
- + 4:5-6:30 Terror on every side
He lives near the Babylonian exile 598 and the fall of Jerusalem 587 BCE
- + Jeremiah is announcing it's time of judgment upon Judah

Jeremiah's prophetic word is to break the numbness of the people and the king/party through imagery.

- + Time: Jeremiah 8:7, 4:22 - Judah does not know what time it is
- + Time to grieve because the powers do not know the depth of their failure and coming judgment. They want to keep up distraction, bread and circuses.
Jeremiah gives full voice to pain. He lives as a sign of grief and loss at this point.

Jeremiah is speaking to people whose eyes are glazed over.

The tears of the prophet are to expose and perhaps heal the numbness. "The denying and deceiving kind of numbness is broken only by the embrace of negativity, by public articulation that is fearful and ashamed of the future we have chosen. The pain and regret denied only immobilizes. In the time of Jeremiah, the pain and regret denied prevented any new movement either from God or toward God in Judah. The Covenant was frozen and there was no possibility of newness until the numbness was broken."

TAKE OUTS

- + Jesus of Nazareth who understands grief as the ultimate criticism that had to be addressed against Jerusalem (Matthew 23:27, Luke 19:41).
- + We as a community need to make space for grief.
- + Repentance requires awakening to the consequences of sin and the death it works.
- + Weeping permits newness.
- + Understand, you are the target of the numbing of the culture. The Spirit of God is at work, but so is the spirit of Antichrist, of numbness.
- + Worship gatherings and prayer gatherings are about provoking new imagination.
- + If you cannot see beyond: Follow, Scripture, Relationships, Grieve well