

THE GOSPEL



Week 3: Culture "Life in Babylon"

Jeremiah 29:1-14

⊕ OPEN

Welcome to our series called "**The Gospel**" which means good news! Like examining a fine jewel, we are going to examine the various facets of the gospel reflecting on a different dimension of its message each week. So far we have looked at the individual (salvation) and corporate (Church) dimensions of the gospel. This week we are moving outward with a view of the gospel within culture. How does the gospel fit and find a home within the surrounding culture that we live in today? For the western Church, gone are the days when Christianity sits at the centre of culture but has been pushed to the margins of society. **Exile** was a reality for God's people throughout history and it is one that provides a message for us today. Instead of simply "surviving" God calls us to live **faithful and fruitful** lives, embodying the gospel in the land we live.

👥 SHARE & RECONNECT

- Share about a time when you saw Christianity play a role in culture. How was it received?
- Share about a time when you experienced faith in Jesus marginalized, misunderstood, or even dismissed in our culture. How did that experience shape your faith?

📖 READING

- Read Jeremiah 29:1–14 (*CONTEXT: The prophet Jeremiah writes this letter to the Jewish exiles who were conquered and carried off by Babylon. Jeremiah instructs them how to live in a culture not their own.*)
- Verse 1 states that Nebuchadnezzar carried the people into exile but verse 4, 7, and 14 paints a different picture. God was not absent in exile but through Nebuchadnezzar carried his people there and remained with them. Why did God's people need to be reminded of this?

REFLECT

We celebrate God's sovereignty when times are good but question it when times are difficult. Jeremiah's message was that God had not been defeated or deserted his people.

- If God through Babylon was the one who carried his people in exile how did this give God's people hope that he could carry them home again? How does this understanding of exile change your understanding of the popular verse of Jeremiah 29:11?

EXILE IMPLIES MUCH MORE THAN SIMPLE GEOGRAPHICAL DISLOCATION; IT CAN BE A CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL CONDITION AS WELL. IT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF KNOWING THAT ONE IS AN ALIEN, AND PERHAPS EVEN IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE DOMINANT VALUES RUN COUNTER TO ONE'S OWN. — LEE BEACH.

- Exile was a way of life for the people of God going right back to when Adam and Eve were removed from the garden of Eden. When have you felt "exiled" being surrounded by a culture that was opposed to Christ? How did Jesus meet you and strengthen you in that place?
- Read again Jeremiah 29:7. Instead of living like *refugees*, God calls his people to settle down as *residents* of this new land and build, homes, farms, and families. More surprising is that God calls his people to live like missionaries not mourners in this land.
 - How can we shift our focus from viewing our surrounding culture with misery to a mission field of people who need to know Jesus?
 - What would it look like for you to bring the peace and prosperity of Jesus into your neighbourhood, workplace, or school? How could you begin praying for those who seem against you?
 - What are some creative ways you can bring the presence of Jesus into the surrounding culture in a transformative way that is both faithful and fruitful?

PRAY

1. In what ways are you feeling exiled in your faith journey now? Pray for one another to be strengthened.
2. Pray that Jesus would give each person boldness and courage to bring his presence into the places you do life in (work, neighbourhood, school, etc)
3. Pray for Wellspring that we would keep reaching out with the grace and gospel of Jesus Christ into our community.