

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Sermon Series: All Around You

Title: God Near in Exile

Speaker: Matt Ewert

Text: Psalm 137; Ezekiel 1; Ezekiel 8-10

Date: December 17, 2017



DISCUSSION

"God isn't a God who leaves. He's a God who goes. He goes with His people wherever they go. He's always near, in any and all circumstance." (Direct quote from Matt's message)

Two big questions addressed: "Where is God?"; "Is God enough?" when things go 'wrong' in life?

Summary: Review the major texts

- Jewish people lose their spiritual center – the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:8-11)
- The Jews land up in Babylonian exile and have lost their song – a lament in Psalm 137
- The same God in the Jewish temple is the same God in their exile in Babylon – Ezekiel 1:28
- What should Jews do when in exile? Jeremiah 29:4-7 "Seek the welfare of the city."

Application: Our God-Shaping Experiences

None of us are exempt from experiences that cause us to lament – we mourn, grieve, groan, weep. How do we approach life as a follower of Jesus when we land up in the pits?

Someone has said that there is one question we should ask ourselves:

- **What is God up to in my life?** When things are tough, do we ask questions like: "Where is God?" "Is God enough?" This message addresses these issues when Pastor Matt poses those two questions in his sermon.

Scope of our Lament at South Abbotsford Church: Share our stories of living in exile when we wonder about God.

At South Abbotsford, we are an intergenerational fellowship that experiences a wide range of lament. Where do you resonate with your particular lament?

- I had a dream after high school or university and it was shattered.
- I thought I had found the person for my marriage, but that relationship ended.
- We want to have kids, but so far we are barren.

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- We thought our kids would follow Jesus, but this hasn't happened yet.
- Unexpectedly, my illness has dramatically changed my health.
- Once the kids left home, our marriage seems to have lost any purpose.
- Retirement seems to be a series of losses.

Choosing to live well in every and any circumstances:

- How does Philippians 4:11-13 inform our approach when lament and losses come our way?
- Are you focussed on the past, singing sad songs on the current riverbank of your current exile? Trying to recreate a supposed "golden age"?
- Are you mad at God? Confused about what God is up to in your life?
- Respond to Pastor Matt's encouragement: "Your primary mission is to attend to God exactly in the space you are in, and to pay attention to Him in the present."

Wrap-Up:

- How can we pray for each other in our lament?
- How can the Holy Spirit empower us to push into our mission even though things are tough right now?
- How can you make a difference in your family, your friends, your neighbours, your colleagues when they are in lament?