

Sermon: Redemptive Participation

Text: Daniel 6

Date/Place: 10.2.16 | Reality Carp

Jeremiah 29:4-7

Daniel 6:1-13

That is God's word, let's pray.

So a little background: Daniel was about 70 years old at this point in the story. He was taken captive in Babylon when he was a teenager, back when he purposed in his heart not to sin against God and eat from the king's table. When he had this decisive moment when he charted a course for the kind of man he wanted to be when he was 70...that is a man who is faithful and dependent on YHWH.

My seminary professor would call this Abrahamic Righteousness. A righteousness that starts with Loyalty to YHWH, Trust in YHWH's provision and Obedience to YHWH

That was Daniel as a teenager.

And Daniel lived a long life in Babylon...

And my question this morning is:

What gave Daniel the **strength**, the **vision**, the **fortitude**, the resolve and resilience to live in Babylon as a faithful witness to God and as a good citizen of Babylon over a lifetime?

Before I start to answer that question I need to back up a bit.

And I need to talk about exile.

Daniel lived in exile. We live in exile. But what in the world does that mean?

There are two major movements in the OT as it pertains to life in the land.

The Old Testament and Life in the Land: Promised Land and Exile

Promised Land paradigm

- Starts in the Exodus and goes to the period of the Kings...

- Starts: when children of Israel are in bondage to Egypt, God punishes Egypt and with a mighty hand and out stretched arm, he delivers his people while crushing Egypt (enemy).
- God then leads his people into the Land of Milk and Honey.
 - On the way God gives them victories over their enemies, He also creates a nation out of Israel, he gives them law and order, gives them an economy and the rules of farming and how they are to keep their land.
 - Israel is moving toward being the **dominate culture**...for the purpose of being a light to the world.
 - They get into Jerusalem, they have a king, build a temple and a palace and are a **legit nation**.
 - You with me?

But then there's this dramatic shift

Exile paradigm

- Due to Israel's disobedience for generations they are taken into exile.
- Temple is destroyed. People are captured.
- Majority of Israel is made to live under the rule of another nation; another dominant culture where the way of life and the way of law and the way they were to treat the land was **vastly different** than life in the Promised Land.
- They were strangers in a strange land.
- **And the way they lived in exile changed dramatically.**

Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles giving them divine instruction on *how to live life being faithful to God in Babylon* until God restored all things.

Okay, so what's my point?

- The book of Daniel won't have formative power in our lives unless we come to grips with the reality that we live as Exiles and not in the Promised Land.

But this is not as easy as you think.

The Promised Land paradigm has been deeply formative to our nation and still very much is. This paradigm is about people who left where they were from around the world to come to this nation for the Promised opportunity of a better life. And under our nations' ideology, God is the one who was the giver of all the blessing of our nation. "God bless America"

And in Promised Land thinking we believe that progress will make a better life, technology will make a better future...no questions asked

- And so we gentrify, we build better homes, better cars, we move to the suburbs **or** we move to the city if we can afford what we want in the city.
- In the Promised Land world we try to create a perfect world to live in, a subculture that keeps me safe from harm and people that might kill my vibe or bum me out, or ruin a perfect life for my kids...
 - The filth of the city makes us sick, not because it breaks the heart of God, but because it bums us out.
 - So we want to live in a better neighborhood with parking and cleaner streets and walk able coffee places, but not too loud of a street but one with life in it, and a place where the sun comes out in the summer...
 - WE SLIP INTO PROMISED LAND THINKING

This is especially easy to do in Carpinteria because this place is as close as it gets to perfect living. Are you kidding me, it's nicknamed the Promised Land!

- There is no other place on earth that feels like this. I LOVE THIS PLACE. I leave my windows down in my car, the two people I was driving with this week keep their keys in their center console! ARE. YOU. KIDDING. ME?
 - Do you lock your doors? Raise your hands if you don't lock your doors?

Look at me and listen to me: This is not the Promised Land. This is not the Kingdom of God. **It's still yet to come.**

You Christian are in exile. You are here from another better country to bring the shalom of that better country to bear on this one.

Jeremiah puts it like this:

"Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace, you will find your peace."

This is a huge movement in the story of God.

He says to people like Daniel living in Babylon, "You are not in the Promised Land anymore, you are in Exile, and I put you there, and I want you to seek the Shalom of that city, pray for that city, for it's shalom, if that city has shalom you will have shalom."

Exile living is completely different way of living. It's a different way of thinking about life. Demands something of God's people that's completely unlike Promised Land vision.

Exile people know they don't live in the Promised Land and they are not promised a perfect life here on earth. **Exile people exist for something else.**

Exile people know we live in a world of tremendous need and where we're meant to be a representative of a different kind of life, a different set of hopes, a different vision of what it means to be human, with a different capacity to love.

When we live with that understanding and meet the person that is hard to love, or face the impossible situation in our city that is causing so much heart ache and violence we don't think: I have to get out of here, this city is going to poop!

- No, we at that moment realize: **it is to this very thing that I have been called.** I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be. I'm supposed to show up to love in unexpected ways with wisdom and a hope that's not of this world.

Exile paradigm vs. the Promised Land paradigm is so important to understand.

We recently did a teaching series at our church in SF on this exilic way of life and we called it: Being a Creative Minority:

A creative minority is a Christian community in a web of stubbornly loyal relationships, knotted together in a living network of persons, in a complex, and challenging cultural setting, who are committed to practicing the way of Jesus together for the renewal of the world.

And it's my argument that what we can learn from Daniel's life is what this kind of life looked like.

Specifically today...

How did Daniel **redemptively participate** as a citizen of Babylon?
(the question I would like to answer in the remainder of our time)

What did it look like for Daniel to **Seek The Shalom of Babylon?** (Jeremiah)

Redemptive participation has to be rooted in nonparticipation

- This is Daniel's 3 friends quietly not participating in the civic worship of Babylon in chapter 3.
- This is Daniel asking not to eat from the king's table in chapter 1
- This is Daniel in chapter 6 praying to God with his face towards Jerusalem three times a day even if it's against the law.

We can't redemptively participate in our culture until we know the points where we must draw the line in nonparticipation.

"Intentional disengagement from the dominate culture is the necessary precondition for a meaningful engagement of that same dominant culture."

(Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City* 40)

- If we are to engage with the dominate culture (American Individualism) to bring peace here we must **start** with ways we will **not participate** or ways we will **disengage** from this culture.

This has to do with fidelity and piety. *Holiness is the biblical word for it.*

As people whose loyalty lies with Jesus Christ we will not-participate in the way our culture uses sex, money, and power.

What we will find is that our nonparticipation will give us a more **powerful** life and voice to redemptively participate.

- Many Christian's today lack the power for meaningful engagement in our culture because we don't really know what separates us from our culture...we have been colonized by our culture and therefore are not a prophetic voice...there is nothing that makes us **strange**...that causes people to question or ask questions.
 - What do you do that's different? What do you believe that's different?

- It has to start here: Sex, Money, Power. This is the way the early church subverted Rome, it's what gave them the cultural traction and teeth to speak powerfully and prophetically into their culture.

Daniel lived this **peculiar** life inside the halls of power in Babylon for most of his life. He saw three different kings and two different kingdom come through to rule Babylon.

Under the rule of King Darius in chapter 6 we see that Daniel had such a practiced faithfulness to God that the only way to accuse Daniel and try to destroy his life, was if they tried to make **Daniel's faithfulness to God illegal**. (think about that, there was no other way to accuse him)

- END OF POINT ONE: non-participation

Another way Daniel lived into Redemptive Participation was by living a **Practiced Way of Life**. He lived under a **rule of life** that included fixed hour prayer.

He turned to God three times a day in prayer his whole life to fix his mind and heart and intentions on God.

Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

- Opened toward Jerusalem: why? When Israel lived in exile they were to direct their hearts and minds and bodies towards Jerusalem, lest they forget. This was to orient them towards a kingdom coming and a kingdom promised.
- We as followers of Jesus are taught the same thing. Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of heaven...when he taught us to pray he said start like this, "Our Father in HEAVEN." ...
 - That's who we belong to and that's where our heart is to be directed.
 - And then we are to pray with all of heaven's resources...your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!

We need this kind of orientation. And not just daily, we need it three times a day.

Ash and I just got back from traveling in July. Spent time in Kauai and then London. We lived this time very intentionally together with holy intent. We would wake to seek God together and spend 3 hours talking about what God was doing in our hearts and where we've seen him throughout our history and where we see him leading and we would pray. When we got to London we would awake to pray to seek the peace of London, devotionals, prayer walking, ministering to the Chaddicks, etc. I saw my wife come alive. Her eyes were open, I mean like to people and the world and to her place in it as a Christian placed in this world by God on his mission.

Then we got home and it took 8 days, 8 days of full time work for her to see the life sucked out of her and she was waking up just to get through her day, come home, have dinner and try to get to bed at a decent hour to wake up and do it all over again.

Ever been here?

Do you see why we need practices like fixed hour prayer to awaken our hearts to who God is and where we are and why we're here? I've been here a million times in my life.

But this wasn't just orienting prayer for Daniel, this was **Prayer as Resistance**.

Look at what it says in

Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

"When Daniel learned that the decree had been published... he down on his knees and prayed."

Daniel guarded his spiritual practices with **tenacity and rebellion**. "I will pray to my God, I will worship my God, I will be devoted to my God alone..."

- I wonder how easy it is for our schedule to “bump” off our spiritual practices? It doesn’t even take “LAW” for us. It just takes another obligation. (we’re so lame!)
 - “I couldn’t go worship with the people of God because I “HAD” this other commitment.”
 - “I couldn’t pray because I “HAD” to be at work early.”
 - “I couldn’t be generous to that missionary this year because I “HAD” to pay off debt.”
 - What does it take? Almost nothing.

The spiritual practices of prayer, Sabbath keeping, fasting, generosity, Sunday worship—**are acts of resistance!**

And these practices are the seedbed for a life of redemptive participation in our world

The church is God’s body in the world. It is present to bring about the well-being (shalom) of the city where it dwells. The advice of Jeremiah to pray to the Lord on behalf of the city in which it lives is not a call for passivity—to let God act while the church watches and waits. Genuine prayer requires becoming intoxicated, consumed by God—becoming so filled with the Spirit of God that the church can become an agent of God’s action in the world. ...to pray genuinely to God for the welfare of the city is to yearn with all one’s heart for its well-being. To pray means to weep with God when the city chooses the way of death, to pronounce judgment, to yearn for, urge, and then act with the compassion of God that the city may choose the way of life. (Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City* 39)

When you hear quiet fixed hour prayer or (quiet, polite) non-participation please don’t hear quiet complacency. NO. There are many times where what it means to be a follower of Jesus to act and speak up for The Shalom of the city. We need more radical faithfulness not less.

So how do we Redemptively Participate as a Creative Minority in the place we live?

I’ll give you a few different paradigms that work toward what I think it means to redemptively participate in our culture:

As Philosophers, Citizens and Artists (Seeking the Peace of the City)

Philosophers- As philosophers we love wisdom, especially the wisdom of God. With wisdom we discern what is true what is right and what is good and creatively bring that to bear on our culture.

- We need philosophers in the business who will bring the wisdom of God to bear on a world driven by capitalism and consumerism. And these people need to work inside capitalism and consumerism to help people to see what is right and good, not just is profitable and successful.
- We need philosophers in tech (I understand LinkedIn just opened an office down the street) that is thinking through not just what technology can do **for us**, but what technology is doing **to us**. That are helping people not just think through what the public wants but how do we become the kind of people who want the right kind of things?

Citizens- As citizens what is our role in SF and how do we exercise our responsibility in seeking the good of the human community and the well-being of earth?

- We need to be citizens that tie our peace to the peace of the city. If the city is in unrest, we are too. And then we pray and get to work on making things right.

Artists- But we have to do all of this as artists. I can't think of a better example of this than Martin Luther King Jr. He was a philosopher, he was a true citizen and as such he imagined a better world and spoke into our world with beauty.

- He expressed a cultural vision in a excellent way. His Letter from a Birmingham Jail and his I Have A Dream speech were flat out works of art.
- He used poetry, image, metaphor, prophecy, and gospel song in a way that captured the heart and imagination.
 - This is a creative minority

He said in "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

"Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right."

(Martin Luther King Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail")

Earlier this year I heard a podcast review the new Chance the Rapper album. (The Watch, Podcast on culture)

- I love this album, I've been talking about it most of the year.
 - Song: Drown
 - Like everything is everything
 - Like all them days He prayed with me
 - Like emptiness was tamed in me
 - ...And all that was left was his love...
 - Gospel Choir kicks in..
 - "Chance, let me in!" -Kirk Franklin
 - Jesus is the only one who can quench our thirst

"This dude makes religion sound fantastic. I don't know if I encountered that sort of relationship with something that I don't have in art that makes me envious of having it in that way. ...I listen to Chance rap about his life and he loves being a Christian and I'm like that sounds interesting, maybe that's something to look into and did not expect I'd ever say that... (other guy says, while kinda nervous laughing "I didn't expect you to say that either") ...I was really moved by this album.... I feel like I'm gaining my religion here, I'm really moved by this record"

that.

Philosophers, Citizens, Artists. A great way to think about Redemptive Participation

Another is from Henri Nowuen:

Taken
Blessed
Broken
Given

This is the pattern of Christ. When he had taken the bread he held it up to heaven and blessed it and said this is my body given for you. Then he broke it and gave it to them.

This is the pattern of our Lord and it is the pattern we are live into. For the life of the Christian should be seen as given for the life of the world.

You are here for the life of the world. You are bread to the world.

- Your life is a life that has been Taken (Chosen) by God. You belong to God.
- Your life is a life that has been blessed, blessed to be a blessing.
- Broken, your frailties and sufferings are what make you you. We don't as Christians try to cover up our imperfections and our flaws. In some beautifully perfect way the Bible say in 2 Cor 4:7 that it's through the brokenness of our lives that the surpassing greatness of Christ shines. The cracks and the brokenness of our lives let the light out. And show that the power is from God and not from us.
- Given (Breshears: Placed, Garden of Eden), your life is given to be salt and light in the world.

A few months ago a friend of mine sent me a book he found on his travels. He's a set designer in Hollywood so he has to pop into obscure stores in his travels to find set pieces for movies. And he came across this old book written in the 1950's about SF.

It's called Crusade at the Golden Gate:

PICTURE OF BOOK

I've read a lot about this city and I never knew this but Billy Graham had a Crusade in SF 1958 (April 27 - June 22). Writer for the SF Examiner (also a minister), wrote a book on the crusade.

In the opening chapter he writes about SF (The Place) and the spiritual climate of SF what it's like to be a Christian in SF and what church is like in SF, up against culturally...remember this was 1950's

"Nearly every other sizable city in America has been born out of a strong Christian witness which has helped to shape the city's character... No matter how perverse the elements that later crept in, our American cities by and large have never been able completely to shake off their heritage... But San Francisco has never known that kind of ordered Christian conscience... Thus St. Francis gave his name, but never his spirit, to the brawling young city.

-Sherwood Eliot Writ, *Crusade at the Golden Gate*

Now, I don't know how true that is but I do know that I have the opportunity as a Creative Minority to step into the way of St. Francis here in my city and you have the opportunity in your city.

The way of St. Francis has been described by a Franciscan Scholar as:

The Way of St. Francis:

"The radically unprotected life – a life that's cruciform in shape."

- Everyone open their arms.
 - *THIS IS OUR POSTURE TOWARDS THE WORLD.*
 - *Open, vulnerable, given.*
 - It's to live dangerously open, revealing all that we are in brokenness, and receiving all the pain and sorrow the world will give back in return.

Christ has given us to his world to be a part of its reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

You are given for the life of the world to be a creative minority, let's live into this great call we have from God our savior.