

12.15.13 Small Group Questions, Dale Oquist teaching BC Christmas:

Getting Started

This "BC: Before Christmas" series is reminding us that the story of Christmas is not a random story, but rather a continuation of a story that has been taking place for thousands of years.

- *Are there times you believe your life is just "random"? Explain.*
- *How has God been teaching you and growing you through this series?*

Looking Back

Opening of the Gospel of Luke in chapter 1

- Older couple who can't have children - Zechariah and Elizabeth
- Sounds like Abraham and Sarah in Genesis

Luke 1:67-79

- Luke 1 addresses Abraham (v. 73), David (v. 69) and the Exile (v. 71)
- V. 74 - Zechariah's enemy is Rome...enemy used to be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon
- V. 79 - Isaiah 9

The Gospel didn't pop out of thin air. In Matthew 1:17, we are reminded of Abraham, David, & the Exile.

- We focused on Abraham last week.
- This week we will focus on David & the Exile

History lesson backdrop:

- Generations in slavery and then wandering in the wilderness
- How do you settle down now in the a Promised Land?
- Judges (prophetic and military mind) - transition people from living on the land to living as a landed people
- Samuel - bridge from the judges to a king
- Judges 21:24-25 - "everyone did as they saw fit"
- 1 Samuel 8 - Israel cries out for a king because they want to look like other nations

Samuel warns Israel that a king is not a good idea. God tells Samuel, "They are not rejecting you, Samuel, but rejecting me/Yahweh as King."

- They didn't realize how good they had it until the good was gone.
 - *Give an example of a time you didn't know how good you had it until circumstances changed.*

- The very thing they are crying out for/desire will take them further from God/their destiny.
 - *What things have you found yourself desiring, and once you got them, they took you further from God?*

1st king = Saul - clueless and very flawed individual, self-deception

2nd King = David (2 Samuel 7:1-17 - the prophets assume you know this moment in Scripture)

- David lives in a palace and the Ark of God is in a tent/tabernacle
- God - "Are you the one to build me a house (temple) to dwell in?"
- God is putting the brakes on David's project
- 2 Samuel 7:9b - God says this very thing to Abraham (Genesis 12)
- 2 Samuel 7:11 - "house" here is "dynasty"
- God is reestablishing His promise through David
 - David is thinking Solomon, but God is speaking of His Son, JESUS
- 2 Samuel 7:14 - the phrase, "when he does wrong" - how can this be Jesus?
 - David's line is in Southern Kingdom and this line of David will do wrong...that throne will still lead to Jesus

God has a hard time holding His people's attention!

- Example - English teacher teaching about "direct" and "indirect" objects and students are falling asleep; the teacher kicks trash can
 - "I kicked the trash can." (Trash can is the direct object)
 - "I give Jonas/Steve/Bethany the trash can." (Jonas/Steve/Bethany is indirect object)
 - You'll never forget what direct and indirect objects are

Kicking of the trash can gets your attention

- God kicks a lot of trash cans (plagues, floods, burning bushes, whisper, unexpected babies being born) to get His people's attention
- God uses moments of pain, fear, struggle to get our attention.
 - *What trash can has God been kicking around you lately? In other words, what has God been using to get your attention recently?*

Days of the exile were some of the largest days of kicking the trash can

- They were in exile for 70 years...that got their attention!
- God did not forget His people or leave them in exile - Jeremiah 30:3
- Exile wasn't always slavery...think of Daniel

Three categories of exile:

1. Scattered and so assimilated so quickly into the culture that they disappeared
 - Ex. People in a small group or at church and then something happens and they disappear...you call and can't reach them; no access or interest to message this morning; someone needs to personally deliver message to them.
2. Removed from their homes and families and taken to a strange land; the exile became acceptable and comfortable...people begin to succeed in the midst of a new culture
 - Living apart from spiritual home; people with access to the message and perhaps listening to it this very moment - associated with church or Jesus; no intention of changing or open to transformation; nothing of Jesus or church attached to life during the rest of the week
 - People who had the chance to go back (Nehemiah 7)...only a small portion go back home
 - Can is kicked many times and we are still not paying attention
3. Those people who the moment there is an opportunity to return, they are ready...they just need one small, simple reason
 - Daniel
 - Those who return home in Nehemiah 7
 - Jeremiah 31 - God will turn your hard heart into a soft one

Image of Sheep and a Shepherd:

- Sheep who always go astray, the shepherd would break its leg and nurse it back to health...sheep will learn to trust the shepherd
- Isn't it sad that sometimes God has to break our legs to get us to trust Him?! \
- *Why are we so resistant to put our trust in God?*

Moving Forward

Dale asked, "Are you in exile today?" How did/would you respond? Why?

Dale challenged us to make a choice to come back to Him. What does that choice mean for you and me, practically?

Spend time in prayer, that you would be receptive and responsive to the message God has been trying to get across to you.

How can we pray for you this week?