**Smoke Signals**

**Depression (Part 1)- Week 6**

**Small Group Notes**

**November 14 and 17**

**Main Point:** A common smoke signal that impacts many today is that of depression.

**Introduction:** What is the worst loss that a team you supported has experienced? It may be a college football team; it may be your team didn’t win the championship because the other team made the last second shot. Often what can happen after these moments, we can get down. We can look for all the reasons the shot shouldn’t have happened. And in a small way we get mildly depressed.

Even though that happens in sports every day, the reality is that in our lives, there can be times of suffering we experience, times when things didn’t go the way we wanted, or if we were treated unfair, and we don’t just get mildly depressed, but we feel like we need to shut down and shut out others.

**Share a way, big or small, in which suffering has touched your life this week. How did you respond?**

**What did you learn about God from this circumstance? What did you learn about yourself?**

**Read the quote, “Depression may be more than spiritual but it not less than.” What is meant by this quote?**

During seasons of pain, we can be tempted to turn away from God in anger or despair. But these times are actually meant to have the opposite effect.

Today we are going to see how from Jeremiah’s perspective, depression was a reality. He was in a painful place as the kingdom has been removed from the children of Israel and Jerusalem was being destroyed. Yet even in this painful place, we are going to see how the Lord showed him there truly is hope found in Jesus Christ!

**Discuss:**

**Consider the main points from today’s sermon:**

* **How to be depressed:**
	+ **Wear yourself out**
	+ **Shut people out**
	+ **Focus on the negative**
	+ **Live with unrealistic expectations**

1. Read Lamentations 3: 1-18.

**How would you characterize Jeremiah’s attitude and outlook?**

**Does it seem strange to you that Jeremiah the prophet attributed his affliction and depression to God?**

**Find a phrase or sentence in the first 18 verses of Lamentations 3 to which you can relate. Share what you connect with about this verse.**

**From verse 8, we know the prophet had handled his depression in the way he should, by praying to God. Why, then, does God sometimes allow His children to continue in despair even after we cry out to Him for help?**

Just by reading these verses we can see how Jeremiah was lonely and suffering.

2. Read Lamentations 3: 19-21

**What are ways that you today remember your affliction and wandering? How can our mind, left unguarded, be tempted by the devil to think only of our suffering?**

**Look at verse 21. Why did Jeremiah have to take an active role in calling to mind the character of God?**

**What does it look like in your life to be someone of hope versus despair? How is “having hope” different from “being hopeful”?**

We are called in these verses to be reminded of hope. This is more difficult in difficult times, yet we will see that when we do have a longing for the Lord, there is joy that comes and not despair.

3. Read Lamentations 3:22-26

**Describe a time of suffering when you learned that God’s mercies are as reliable as the sun rising every morning (Lam. 3:23). How do the Lord’s mercies give you hope?**

**What is God’s faithfulness not dependent upon? Why is that important to remember?**

**Historically, have you grown more during easy times or tough times? Why do you think that is? How does that impact your perspective on suffering?**

**Dig Deeper:**

***Lamentations 3:1-18:***

***1 [***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=lamentations+3&version=NIV#fen-NIV-20356a)***]I am the man who has seen affliction
    by the rod of the Lord’s wrath.
2He has driven me away and made me walk
    in darkness rather than light;
3indeed, he has turned his hand against me
    again and again, all day long.***

***4He has made my skin and my flesh grow old
    and has broken my bones.
5He has besieged me and surrounded me
    with bitterness and hardship.
6He has made me dwell in darkness
    like those long dead.***

***7He has walled me in so I cannot escape;
    he has weighed me down with chains.
8Even when I call out or cry for help,
    he shuts out my prayer.
9He has barred my way with blocks of stone;
    he has made my paths crooked.***

***10Like a bear lying in wait,
    like a lion in hiding,
11he dragged me from the path and mangled me
    and left me without help.
12He drew his bow
    and made me the target for his arrows.***

***13He pierced my heart
    with arrows from his quiver.
14I became the laughingstock of all my people;
    they mock me in song all day long.
15He has filled me with bitter herbs
    and given me gall to drink.***

***16He has broken my teeth with gravel;
    he has trampled me in the dust.
17I have been deprived of peace;
    I have forgotten what prosperity is.
18So I say, “My splendor is gone
    and all that I had hoped from the Lord.”***

Where did Jeremiah begin to think the origin of suffering was from? How does having an incorrect understanding of suffering impact our view of God?

How does having an eternal perspective impact the way you look at suffering and the reasons we are depressed?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:1-2; Isaiah 43: 15-19. How do these verses speak of how our relationship with the Lord impacts the way we view things that can depress us in the world?

***Lamentations 3:19-21:***

***I remember my affliction and my wandering,
    the bitterness and the gall.
20I well remember them,
    and my soul is downcast within me.
21Yet this I call to mind
    and therefore I have hope:***

How does our memory impact the way we view suffering?

What perspective did Jeremiah take when memories of problems in the past tried to rear their head?

Why is having hope (in the promises of God) a powerful means to combat the symptoms of depression?

***Lamentations 3: 22-26***

***Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,
    for his compassions never fail.
23They are new every morning;
    great is your faithfulness.
24I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion;
    therefore I will wait for him.”***

***25The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,
    to the one who seeks him;
26it is good to wait quietly
    for the salvation of the Lord.***

Why is it important to not feel your way to beliefs, but to believe our way into feelings? How can your feelings deceive you? How does belief in the gospel combat wrong feelings?

How do we forget about God’s great love for us? What are ways that you can each day remember His faithfulness? What are ways that you can share it with others?

Are you in a pit today? Instead of asking, “how do I get out?”; have you asked, “what is the Lord teaching me here?” What has God revealed to you in the pit? How can you help others out?

**Do:**

What “compassions” or “faithfulness” has the Lord shown you this week? How have you shown your love and gratitude to Him?

What does it mean to have the Lord as your portion? What are some of the other things in life you might be tempted to look to other than God to be your portion?

Read Romans 8:28. How might knowing that God promises to work all things for the good of those who love Him help you maintain a posture of submissiveness in the midst of suffering?