

# Hope in a Hopeless Time

Session 1: October 6, 2019

1. What makes our current time hopeless?
  - a. Economic Hopelessness
    - i. Economic Poverty: Un[der]employment, Homelessness, Lack of Wealth
    - ii. The Other Poverties that Undergird Poverty (Smiley and West, 2012)
      1. Poverty of Opportunity
      2. Poverty of Affirmation
      3. Poverty of Courage
      4. Poverty of Compassion
      5. Poverty of Imagination
  - b. Political Hopelessness
    - i. Deterioration of Democratic Powers (West, 2004)
      1. Free-Market Fundamentalism
      2. Aggressive Militarism
      3. Escalating Authoritarianism (Inverted Totalitarianism)
    - ii. The Gridlock of Two-Party Politics
    - iii. The Polemics of Contemporary Discourse
  - c. Spiritual Hopelessness
    - i. The Rise of the "Nones"
    - ii. The Increase of Human Mortality Rates
    - iii. The Drug Epidemic
    - iv. Fragility (in all of its forms)
  - d. NIHILISM (West, 2004)
    - i. Evangelical
    - ii. Paternalistic
    - iii. Sentimental
2. A Biblical Hopeless Time: The Fall of Israel and Judah
  - a. The Davidian Dynasty
  - b. The Fall of Israel to the Assyrians
  - c. The Fall of Judah to the Babylonians
3. Prophecy and the Babylonian Captivity: Introduction
  - a. Jeremiah and the Fall of Judah
  - b. Daniel and the Court of Nebuchadnezzar
  - c. Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones [the Diaspora]

#### 4. Hope and Hopelessness

- a. Prophetic Hope vs. the Pollyannaish (West, 2004)
  - i. Socratic Questioning
  - ii. The Prophetic Tradition
  - iii. Tragicomic Hope
- b. Hope as a Kind of Waiting (Lamentations 3: 19-26)

<sup>19</sup>I remember my affliction and my wandering,  
the bitterness and the gall. <sup>20</sup>I well remember them,  
and my soul is downcast within me.

<sup>21</sup>Yet this I call to mind  
and therefore I have hope:

<sup>22</sup>Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail. <sup>23</sup>They are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.

<sup>24</sup>I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;  
therefore I will wait for him."

<sup>25</sup>The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,  
to the one who seeks him; <sup>26</sup>it is good to wait quietly  
for the salvation of the LORD.

#### c. Some Key Responses

- i. There is no need to wait quietly *per se*.
  - 1. Revolutionary Patience (West, 1985)
  - 2. Active Resistance (in the meanwhile)
- ii. God's faithfulness includes punishing wickedness.
- iii. If one has hope in God and God's justice, then there would be no counterclaim that God should not have allowed the wickedness of people to lead to their own ruin.

#### 5. The Major Foes of Prophetic Hope

- a. Despair (to be countered by love)
- b. Dogmatism (to be countered by loyalty)
- c. Oppression (to be countered by freedom)

#### 6. What Prophets Do (Shulman, 2008)

- a. Announce
- b. Bear Witness
- c. Forewarn
- d. Sing and Poeticize

*\*For next time (October 20) . . . Jeremiah 2-6 and Lamentations 2-3*