

**Life Group Notes**

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023**

**Speaker:** Scott Taylor

**Title:** Jeremiah: No Balm In Gilead

**Passage:** Jeremiah 8: 18-22

In week 4 of our series in Jeremiah we looked at one of his laments. Lament being a passionate expression of grief or sorrow, or a complaint. As we worked through the passage we saw Jeremiah, Judah and God himself all express lament.

Jeremiah was the one that was representing orthodoxy against the backdrop of the turning of Gods people towards other gods and cultural teachings. He saw that it provoked Gods anger and he felt the despair and sorrow of the situation as he hears from God that Judah will be taken off and everything as they know it will end.

The people of God lament as they cry out effectively – Where has God gone – they haven't been interested in God at all, they were happy boxing him up in the temple and visiting him when they want something – now they are in crisis he cant be found.

God laments that his people have turned to idols and foreign Gods! He has been extremely patient but enough is enough. They have turned away from him. Idols come in many shapes and sizes. Tim Keller says: "An idol is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and anything that you seek to give you what God can only give." They are the things we turn to when we are tired hurt or bored instead of turning to God.

The people of God lament again and express their pain that they aren't saved even though significant time passes by. They realise that there is no quick fix.

Jeremiah then cries out again in grief and sorrow and asks is there no medicine (balm) in Gilead or a physician that can help?

In our type of charismatic church, we can think that lamenting isn't allowed – we live in the victory of Christ after all. Surely, I shouldn't complain or feel my pain as Jesus has done it all. Jesus has done it all but that doesn't mean we cannot lament – express our sorrow or pain to God or indeed bring our complaints to God. A lament means we are turning to God: in that very moment we are expressing our trust in him by turning to him. We can bring our complaint to him; we can ask him to intervene, and we can trust that he has our best at heart and that he will hear us. He may not answer as we want, he may not remove or change the circumstance, but he is still with us.

Ultimately Jeremiah didn't see the new beginning that was to be ushered in through Jesus and the new covenant. We know there is balm in Gilead, we know there is a physician, we know there is healing all to be found in Christ. We can turn from idols and come back to him, we can turn to him with our pain our sorrow even our complaints as he knows what it is to suffer in all ways. As we come to him in repentance or lament we know we will find him and he will draw near to us.

**Suggested Questions:**

- 1) What did you hear on Sunday that was a good reminder or something new?
- 2) When have you brought your lament before God and what has it looked like? How did it help?
- 3) Chat around the idols of culture that you see around – what ones have maybe influenced you?

