

WHAT'S NEXT?

Scripture used: Lamentations 1:1-9

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon continues to use the text written by Jeremiah to show that navigating through transitions is key to our life and our faith.

Today Pastor Hurmon built on the “anatomy” of transitions to look at the middle passage - a neutral zone between ending of the old and beginning of the new, and a phase particularly prone to confusion and emptiness.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Jeremiah shows us that worship is not simply an expression of joy - it's also an instrument to work through our pain and suffering. Pastor Hurmon used an anecdote of a child crying out and then being comforted. We lament to be heard and comforted. There are two voices in our scripture today: one is Jeremiah, the narrator; the other one is female, and epitomizes vulnerability. Women could easily transition from being “treasured possessions” (in the ancient culture) to being despised and isolated. Jerusalem here is described as a woman with many lovers who have all left her. She is described as a mother whose children have been captured. The fading away of the familiar brings about a crisis of identity.
- 2) An example of the middle passage was the harrowing journey of slave ships from West Africa to the Americas. Men and women were being transported in degrading conditions. Some of them had been people of rank (chiefs, priests, aristocracy, etc.) in their countries and tribes. They were now dehumanized and covered with shame. They were “groaning and hiding their faces” as our text states. Shame is our inability to do what we (and others we value) think we should be able to do. Some of us are ashamed at our inability to take care of elderly parents with dementia. Some of us are ashamed at our inability to save our marriage. In our scripture, Jerusalem is experiencing both guilt and shame interwoven in a common experience of abuse.
- 3) Shame and guilt cause us to go from feeling that we've made a mistake, to a feeling of “I am bad. I am a mistake.” I am not worthy of love and connection, and thus will withdraw and hide. Common defense mechanisms and reflexes are: justifying ourselves; insincere apologies; and blaming others. A way out of this toxic spiral is to identify and acknowledge our shame, and release it to God. Psalm 34:4-5 says “The Lord answered me and freed me from all my fears. No shadow will darken my face.” In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus said “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Jesus was nailed naked on the cross, purposely to shame and humiliate Him. He who had no sin became sin to impart honor to our lives. In the end, He sat at the right hand of the Father.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** Have you experienced guilt and shame in your life? What transition are you currently going through? What has been the end? What beginning are you looking forward to?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** How have you fared in your middle passage? How dejected were you? How did you regain a sense of honor, virtue, decency, and integrity?
- 3) **DO** As we prepare to move to a new location in Redwood City, can you visualize leaving your old shame and guilt behind (in our old sanctuary, in care of God - so to speak)?

PRAYER