

DENY.

Meeting God in Times of Despair

Psalm 130; Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 11:1-45; Romans 8:6-11

GETTING STARTED (choose one of the two discussion starters)

1. In only 5 words, how would you describe the world today (or our immediate culture)?
2. Observing Culture:
 - a. What is your sense of pain, frustration and/or despair levels in our culture today? What is contributing to these levels.
 - b. What is your sense of hope, joy, and optimism levels in our culture today? What is contributing to these levels.
 - c. Which of the two (despair or hope) seems to be most prevalent to you?

READ and REFLECT

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14.

This may seem like a strange passage. Ezekiel is seeing a spiritual vision by the Spirit of God. Israel is currently in exile in Babylon because of their disobedience and waywardness which cost them an ultimate defeat in battle losing their land, their king and the temple (all things which defined them in their covenant with God). Despair was palpable. It is in this exile that Ezekiel is a prophet.

What does Ezekiel see in this vision (v. 1-3)? How would this connect to the nation of Israel?

What do you appreciate about Ezekiel's reply to God's question?

Read Eze 36:24-32. After years of suppression in exile, how do you think the people would have received these words? Do you think they would have taken them seriously?

What does God do in the vision in Eze 37? What do God's actions mean for the nation of Israel in exile?

Does this vision become a reality right away?

ENGAGE and DISCUSS

It seems like despair is all around us—either we or our friends are experiencing life-draining challenges, or we hear of despair on the news or other media channels.

What is required of us when we face despair—even hopelessness?

What has been your experience in journeying through desperate times? How did it impact you? Your faith? Your relationships?

In the sermon this week, two points were made. Spend the rest of your group engaging these two points.

- Sometimes God alone knows HOW to renew what's died and we just have to wait for HIM to act.
- God alone knows WHEN to repair what has died.

What do you take away from this study and discussion?

NEXT STEPS

- Where are you experiencing *dry bones*? What has led to this point?
- Open yourself and surrender to God in prayer seeking His power to do what only he can do in your life and in this situation.
- Check out the stories being posted each day in the Christ Church Lenten Devotional found at www.cc-ob.org .