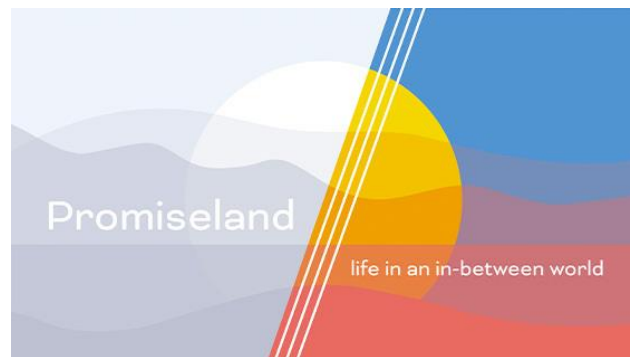




Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides! If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions on page 3.

SERMON-BASED STUDY GUIDE
for the sermon preached on February 20, 2022
“Life Between Sorrow & Joy”—Isaiah 65:17-25



We're living in an in-between time—as families, as a nation, as a church. We're in between a pre- and post-pandemic world. The life we knew isn't coming back, but the new reality hasn't arrived yet—and we don't know when it will. This winter, we're looking back to another in-between time for God's people—the Babylonian exile—and remembering God's promises through the prophet Isaiah. In a series called Promiseland, we're learning that God's promises not only see us through this in-between time, but prepare the way for better times to come.

Group Discussion Questions

Q – Pastor Leah began by talking about nostalgia, which the dictionary defines as “a wistful desire to return in thought or in fact to a former time in one's life, to one's home or homeland, or to one's family and friends; a sentimental yearning for the happiness of a former place or time.” She noted how often human beings—including the Israelites during their time of exile—look back to the past to try to find comfort in difficult times.

- In what ways do you sometimes find comfort in thoughts and memories of earlier times? Why do you think thinking of the past can have a comforting effect?

Q – Our text for this week is Isaiah 65:17-25. We'll start with vv. 17-19, reading it a few times and reflecting on it together. [Invite someone to read the verses out loud.]

“¹⁷See, I will create

new heavens and a new earth.

The former things will not be remembered,

nor will they come to mind.

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight
and its people a joy.

¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem
and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying
will be heard in it no more.”

- What word or brief phrase stands out to you as you in these verses? At this stage, let’s just name the word or phrase that most stood out, without commenting on why.

Now let’s read this passage again, listening for what we think these three verses mean. [Ask a second person to read.]

- What is God’s essential message to his people here?

Let’s hear these verses one last time, listening for what God might be speaking to each of us specifically. [Ask a third person to read.]

- What is the Holy Spirit saying to you through this passage today?

Q – Leah reflected on the word “delight” in this passage: God’s people are invited to rejoice and take delight, and God takes delight in his people.

- What kinds of things bring you delight?
- From what we know of Scripture, what kinds of things bring God delight?

Q – In vv. 20-23, Leah noted, God promises freedom—freedom from death, from futility, from worry. Let’s listen to those verses together now. [Invite someone to read.]

“²⁰ Never again will there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred
will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach a hundred
will be considered accursed.

²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
or plant and others eat.

For as the days of a tree,
so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
the work of their hands.

²³ They will not labor in vain,
nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the Lord,
they and their descendants with them.”

- In your own words, what is God promising here?
- Which of these promises do you most need to hear and believe right now? Is there one of these promises that you wrestle or struggle with?

Q – Pastor Leah ended by saying, “You are invited to practice joy as an act of contemplation, in this life between brokenness and the hope of what God is doing and ultimately will do.”

- Why is it important for Christians to practice joy in the midst of our brokenness? What does it look like for you to practice joy? Are there ways God might be inviting you to deepen or widen your practice of joy?
-

How to Use These Study Guides:

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another.
- You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
- Don’t feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with, and see how the conversation flows.
- If your group meets over Zoom:
 - You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
 - Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.
- Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

Group Leader Support: Please reach out to your Campus Pastor or your Coach if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic. If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor Tim or Pastor Rachel from the Group Life team.