

Sermon 12 October 2025 – Here and Now. As they went!

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We don't always find ourselves where we want to be.

Whether it's a hard season, a place of uncertainty, illness, shattered dreams, broken relationships or just waiting for something to change - we may feel like exiles. Far from the dreams we had or may still have. Far from the life we hoped for. Waiting. Hoping. Crying out to God for a miracle.

But being in exile is not just about a physical location. It can be a state of mind, an emotional, and relational reality too. A feeling of spiritual and social isolation. A place where we feel isolated, or stuck. And that kind of exile can be deeply painful and debilitating— it can chain us, hold us down, make us feel forgotten.

And yet, Scripture meets us in these places. Today's readings speak into those seasons of hardship and uncertainty. They give us a vision of how to live faithfully in exile — and how gratitude is more than a reaction. It's the road to healing.

In Jeremiah 29 the people of God are in Babylon. A real, physical exile. They are strangers in a foreign land. Disappointed and desperate to go home.

And what does God, through Jeremiah, say?

“Build houses and live in them; plant gardens... seek the welfare of the city to which I have sent you” (Jeremiah 29:5–7). In other words: Live. **Even here. Even now.**

God doesn't say, “Wait for things to get better” or “Wait until I rescue you.” God says, “Grow roots. Seek peace. Bless the place where you are.” To us, God is saying, “Don't just settle but live fully and wholeheartedly, even in this painful season.”

This is not resignation — it's resurrection living. Choosing to flourish in the hardest places. Choosing to trust that God is present. In the foreign land. In our shattered dreams and broken lives.

The psalmist, too, has known testing and pain – feeling burdened and trapped he writes, “You brought us into the net; you laid burdens on our backs” (Psalm 66:11). And yet, despite these feelings, the psalmist is still able to say: **“Come and see**

what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.” (v.5) Declaring that God is working, even when we don’t see the full picture. Even in trials, God is present. Even in exile, God is working. And when we choose gratitude — even in the middle of all the darkness and chaos — praise becomes an act of resistance against despair. Gratitude becomes a form of faith. To say, “Come and see what God has done” is to say — I’m not only looking to the future with hope, but also that I am standing in the present with trust.

In 2 Timothy, Paul writes from prison, chained like a criminal. And yet, he says: “The word of God is not chained” (2 Timothy 2:9). Exile. Chains. Hardship. None of it stops the Gospel. Paul urges Timothy — and us — to remain faithful. To endure. Reminding us that that perseverance is a trademark of Christian life and service. That God is faithful and that in Jesus we receive salvation and new life. Yes, there is hardship but there is also hope. Hope that’s not dependent on our circumstances but rooted in God’s faithfulness.

In the gospel reading Luke tells us the story of the ten Lepers. Ten lepers who find themselves in no man’s land – in the region between Samaria and Galilee. Exiled from family and community by disease. In their distress and despair, they cry out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

And Jesus responds with what seems like a strange instruction: “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” Which temple would they go to (Mount Gerazine or Jerusalem)? Which priests are they to show themselves to?

But they don’t ask. They go. And **as they went, they were made clean.**

As they went. Not before. Not instantly. But as they walked in obedience — as they moved forward in faith — healing came.

Sometimes we want God to act now. But healing often comes in the walking. In the trusting. In the going, even when we don’t yet feel different or see the change.

Ten are healed but only one comes back to thank Jesus. To praise God. Only one realizes what God has done. Only one was present to the presence of God. And Jesus says to him, “Your faith has made you well.” (Or, more literally: Your faith has saved you.)

Gratitude didn't just follow the healing. It completed it.

We often think of gratitude as the end of the story — something that comes after the exile is over — when we're healed, restored, and in a good space again. But Scripture tells a different story:

Gratitude is the beginning of faithfulness.

Gratitude grounds us in the now.

Gratitude opens our eyes to the presence of God. Here. Now. Even before the answers come.

Gratitude is not passive. It's active. It changes us.

So, whether your "exile" is physical, emotional, relational, financial, or spiritual — you are in good company.

Today, we are invited to live fully. In the **here and now**. To live with

- Jeremiah's rootedness (to build and plant where we are),
- Paul's perseverance (his faithfulness even in chains),
- The lepers' act of faith (walking before being healed) and
- The Samaritan's gratitude (that restored him to wholeness).

And so, as we rededicate ourselves – our time, talents, gifts, and tithes – to building God's Kingdom in this place, may we do so intentionally. Praising God loudly, even when burdened. Walking in faith, even before we see, or experience, the change. Returning with heartfelt gratitude — and being made whole.

May we live lives that shout, "**Come and see what God has done.**" Not because we have everything we want, but because God is present here and now.

Amen