The Story RENEWING THE PROMISE Jeremiah 31:31-34 February 9, 2014

INTRODUCTION

- a. Have you ever been in trouble for doing something your mom or dad told you not to do. Did they send you to your room or tell you to sit in the corner maybe it was to your "time-out" place.
- 1. Did you wonder if the punishment was ever going to end and whether or not your parents would love you again?
 - b. That is where we find ourselves in The Story today
- 1. As a church we are taking a 31 week trek through the Bible to see how our stories can intersect with God's Story.
- 2. We began in Genesis and will continue through Revelation and each week we take a look at a character, event or place lower story in the Bible that teaches us something about God's Upper Story of his plan and desire to win each of us back to himself.
- c. Today in the story God's people are being punished for their evil ways and for turning away from Him to worship other gods.

I. THE STORY

- a. Because of Solomon's disobedience God told him that his kingdom would be divided into two smaller and weaker kingdoms.
- 1. The Northern Kingdom was called **Israel** and was made up of ten of the tribes of Israel
- 2. The Southern Kingdom was called **Judah** and was made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin
- b. Not one king in the Northern Kingdom did what was pleasing to God and so they were taken captive by the Assyrians in about 722b.c.. They were interspersed with the foreign nations and were never heard of again. The lost tribes of Israel.
- c. Of the nineteen kings in the Southern Kingdom, Judah, five did what was pleasing to the Lord and the other fourteen did evil in the sight of the Lord and encouraged the people to do the same.
- d. Last week in the story we were nearing the end of King Hezekiah reign and the beginning of his son, Manasseh's, reign.
- 1. Hezekiah was one of the good kings and he had turned the people's hearts back to following God and it appeared that things had changed for good.
- 2. But his son, Manasseh, was not at all like him and evil and unfaithfulness returned. Manasseh did more evil that the people God had driven out of the land so Israel could possess it.
- 3. Manasseh brought pagan worship idols into the temple. He worshiped openly other gods and even sacrificed his son to one of them.
 - e. Isaiah the prophet declared that God's judgment was coming.
- 1. Long before Babylon was a powerful nation Isaiah told Hezekiah that they would be the ones to take Judah captive.
 - f. Manasseh's son Amon was no better and the evil continued.
- g. **Amon's son, Josiah, was only eight when he became king**. He was a good king and did what pleased God. He was king for 31 years.
- 1. He began to restore the temple when he was about 24 and that is when they found the Book of the Law that had been lost for many years.
- 2. When Josiah read it he began to tear down all the false worship sights and removed the idols from worship.
 - 3. Josiah was killed in a battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt.

h. He was followed by five evil kings and finally the people were taken captive and into exile by the Babylonians.

i. Two prophets emerge at this time

- 1. **Jeremiah** who is left in Jerusalem to be with those left there.
- 2. **Ezekiel** who is taken into exile with the people.

II. THE PROPHETS

a. Jeremiah

1. Jeremiah is 20 years old when God calls him to be a prophet to the nations.

This happens in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign as king. Jeremiah and Josiah have a good relationship.

2. Jeremiah's call from God is significant and is recorded for us in the first chapter of the book that bears his name.

a. Take a look at verses 4-10

- 1. Before I formed you in your mother's womb I knew you
- 2. Before you were born I consecrated you
- 3. I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations
- 4. Jeremiah responds with, "Lord I can't speak and I am too young"
- 5. God says, "Don't be afraid just go where I send you and say what I tell

you"

6. Then God touches his lips and says, "See I have put my words in your

mouth"

- 3. **Jeremiah is called the "Weeping" Prophet** because he was called on to continue to remind the people of their evil and unfaithfulness.
 - a. He was very alone.
- b. With Josiah's reforms you would think that Jeremiah would think his preaching was doing some good but the trouble was that the people were practicing a fake religion. Looked good on the outside but their hearts were still far from God
- c. When Josiah died Jeremiah lost favor with the kings and was persecuted but he remained faithful to God
- d. Jeremiah wrote down his thoughts and his laments for the nation in two books of the Bible Jeremiah and Lamentations

b. **Ezekiel**

- 1. Ezekiel's early years were spent in Jerusalem until he was taken captive with the others into exile in Babylon
- 2. God calls him to go to the rebellious people of Judah and continue to remind them of the sins that brought them into exile
 - a. Whether they listen or not Ezekiel was to preach to them

III. THEIR WOODSHED MESSAGE

- a. Theirs was a "woodshed" message for the people of Judah. There was punishment coming for their sins and it would be severe.
- b. The **Babylonians** would come and **conquer** the land and take the people captive and destroy the temple.
- c. For them the family name and the land was their identity. To lose this was a major punishment.
- 1. The Northern Kingdom tribes had already lost their identity and been absorbed into the foreign nations.
 - 2. The Southern Kingdom now feared a similar fate.
- d. **It happened just as they had said and the punishment was fulfilled**. The people were taken into exile and would remain there for 70 years
 - 1. It seems that God has sent his people into "timeout"

- 2. The prophets continue to remind them that they are getting what they deserve
- e. What about God's promise to David to have a ruler on the throne. Out of David's family would come the Messiah. How would God keep that promise with the people taken captive?
 - f. Is there any hope for the people?

IV. THE WORD OF HOPE

- a. Amazingly enough, even as Jerusalem is being destroyed and its people carried off to captivity, words of hope and restoration are heard from the prophets.
- b. **God's Story is still alive**. His purpose remains the same. God is pursuing a people to be His own. And although everything looks hopeless, the story is far from over.
- c. Ezekiel shares these words of hope with the captives Ezekiel 36:24-28 (NIV) "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.
- 1. God's desire to restore His people is one theme that we see from the beginning to the end of The Story. No matter how far away from Him God's people were, He was always wanting and waiting for their return.
- d. For those that remained in Jerusalem Jeremiah had these words: Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NIV) "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."
 - 1. God will keep his promise through a new and better covenant
 - 2. This new covenant is through His Son, Jesus the promised Messiah.
 - a. Through Him we will be cleansed
 - b. He will give us a new heart and His Spirit will live within us
 - c. We will dwell with him forever.
- e. It is through this new covenant that Your Story intersects with God's Upper Story. God's desire to restore His people includes you. No matter what you've done and no matter how big of a repeat offender you are, He is wanting and waiting for your return.
- f. Nearly 600 years before Jesus was born these prophets have given us the good news of a new covenant.
- 1. By faith in Jesus we can be cleansed of our sin and forgiven and thus returned to God. His Spirit will help us to follow Him and honor and worship Him.
- g. No matter how hopeless or desperate your life seems to be God is ready to receive you back to himself by faith in Jesus

This is God calling to those that are in "timeout" – I love you and now is the time to come on out and enjoy my presence.

Today I hope you will hear both messages of the prophets

- 1. There are consequences for rebelling against God
- 2. God loves you and wants you to return by faith to Him

8:30 #345 "BLESSED ASSURANCE" 11:00 "THE HEART OF WORSHIP"