

## Jeremiah 29:1-14

### A Creative Minority What is a Creative Minority? Pt. 4 Redemptive Participation

**Introduction:** If it is your first time joining us - Welcome! We have dedicated this year to Biblical Literacy; meaning we as a church are reading the Bible for ourselves to know first hand what it teaches and in order to be shaped by the story of God. And along with that we are teaching through the Bible on Sunday mornings - the main themes and characters. We are currently doing this mini series called *A Creative Minority* using the books of Daniel and Jeremiah as Catalyst for how the people of God live faithfully as a religious minority.

The Book of Daniel has helped the people of God for centuries in thinking deeply and strategically about how we live faithfully to Jesus, and his kingdom in a culture that has a competing vision of what it means to be human, to flourish. A competing vision of freedom. A competing vision of life. How do we live in a culture like this and not just exist, but LIVE, work; how do we cultivate a kingdom of God counter culture?? We've been using this definition of a creative minority to help us understand how we do this:

*"A Creative Minority is a christian community in a web of stubbornly loyal relationships, knotted together in a living network of persons who are committed to practicing the way of Jesus for the renewal of the world." - Jon Tyson, A Creative Minority*

When we think about what it means to be a creative minority we should be thinking in terms of Jesus radical vision of the kingdom of God and it's people as seen in the sermon on the mount - A people who's whole world, and life is radically different - a kingdom tuned people. *"What is taught here (In the sermon on the mount) is symptoms, signs, examples of what it means when the kingdom of God breaks into the world which is still under sin, death, and the devil. You yourselves should be signs of the coming kingdom of God, signs that something has already happened."* - Joachim Jeremias

Or as Karl Barth said, *“The church exists to set up in the world a new sign which is radically dissimilar to the world’s own manner and which contradicts it in a way that is full of promise.”*

This means that our kingdom witness isn’t just about critiquing or deconstructing culture but about living out a new, kingdom of God vision for human identity, purpose, and flourishing. This will include a radical dissimilarity and new incredible hope and potential.

1. **What does a Creative Minority look like?** - Covenantal Community; Compelling Narrative; Counter Cultural Ethics; Counter Formational Practice; Kingdom Allegiance; And Redemptive Participation..
  1. **A Creative Minority is defined by Covenantal Community** - Our influence will be determined by the level of our self-sacrificial commitment to one another and our neighbors, and our willingness to see things through even when things get hard.
    1. “The most eloquent testimony to the reality of the resurrection is....a group of people whose life together is so radically different, so completely changed from the way the world builds a community, that there can be no explanation other than that something decisive has happened in history.” - Will Willimon
  2. **A Creative Minority is fueled, driven and framed by a Compelling Counter Narrative** - the full biblical story of God’s loving relationship with his people, and his redemption brought about through Jesus, culminating in a new heavens and a new earth (Made by God, we are made for God, to join him in his work of renewal in the world). Out of that flows a substitute vision for the economy, education, human sexuality and many other areas - all of these larger issues fit into this all encompassing story. How we view God’s relationship to humanity and his desires for us changes everything. Our identity, as a part of God’s story - results in kingdom activity..
  3. **A Creative Minority is defined by Counter Cultural Ethics/ A Distinct Moral Vision**
    1. The people of God or a Creative Minority are not formed by the culture around them whether modern, post modern/secular, spiritual or religious. God’s people are formed by the word of God - the redemptive narrative of scripture, and the way of Jesus. Jesus our redeemer, and king, defines life for us, right and

wrong, goodness and truth, righteousness and justice. Our lives are about following his pattern of life.

**4. A Creative Minority is defined by Counter Formational Practices**

1. A Creative Minority is not formed by the rhythms, priorities and practices of culture around them, but is shaped by scripture, by sabbath, by fasting, by silence and solitude, by cultivating a life in the presence of the Father - If we are to be signs of the kingdom, properly imaging God to the culture around us - Being human with other humans— we must prioritize and intentionally cultivate counter formative practices - And that takes, time, unplugging from the busyness and demands of our culture to do what is necessary for our spiritual health and people of God Identity.

**5. A Creative Minority is defined by Alternative Allegiance**

1. Giving allegiance to Jesus and his kingdom rather than any country, king, identity, or cultural narrative.. Living out of an alternative authority means that regardless of the consequences, we are loyal to the person of Jesus. He is our king, and we are subjects to his kingdom before any other, citizenship, or loyalty that this life may ask of us. We have confidence that Jesus has the ultimate authority in this world, and our actions reflect that conviction. And yet we live this with profound humility
2. As people whose loyalty lies with Jesus Christ, we will not participate in the way our culture uses sex, money and power – and we must say this with our mouths and with our lives. We will not participate in our culture's idols or our culture's gods or what our culture worships.

**6. A Creative Minority is defined by Redemptive Participation.**

1. It seems that Redemptive Participation is the heart or driver of a Creative Minority. Redemptive participation is when God's people intentionally bring the kingdom of God to bear upon their community, their cities, their neighborhood, their homes.... every nook and cranny of life here on planet earth - to engage our culture with the kingdom of God. I've often thought about where do the needs of our city, it's people/citizens, and the hope of the gospel actually and practically intersect - that is where the church should be...
2. The posture of the church has often been to either hold down the “holiness” fort (Not engaging culture) until Jesus brings the

kingdom of God; or to live a life of complacency as we wait for Jesus to return.

3. Not that anyone outrightly says this but a lot of christians live this way....Yes, there is evil, and suffering, heartbreak, slavery, addiction and the poverty in the world. Jesus came to do something about it in his life, death, and resurrection, and ascension to heaven as king - One day he'll return and set everything right... So we don't have to worry or do anything about evil and suffering, heartbreak, slavery, addiction, oppression or poverty....
4. Everything I said about Jesus is true, but it isn't told to us so that we can wash our hands of the whole thing and concern ourselves with our own affairs, or hopes and dreams - If we are Jesus' people we are invited to enter the fight, to engage in the work of redemption, to be enemies of sin and suffering, heartbreak, slavery, addiction, oppression and the poverty. How? In the same way that Jesus and the early church did - Proclaiming God's good news and incarnating the kingdom of God -love, forgiveness, reconciliation, self sacrifice, faithfulness, generosity, care for the poor, the weak, the single mom, the marginalized, the foreigner and refugee..
5. We are called to join God in his ongoing work of redemption in the world.
  1. With Redemptive Participation we are declaring that God is the Sovereign Lord of history and is presently at work in the world - bringing redemption. The task of the individual and the church is to be attentive and discerning, eager to participate in that redemptive work where opportunities arise. I believe that this is the heart cry or prayer of redemptive participation - Lord, what do you want to do in our city? Lord bring us into what you are already doing in our city? Asking - How can we engage this moment?
6. It seems that this is what Daniel was doing in some sense in chapter 9 of Daniel..
  1. **“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely,**

**seventy years. Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes..... What is he praying for ? vs 17 - “Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. - Daniel 9:1-3;17-18**

2. Daniel has understood, through reading the scroll of Jeremiah, that the captivity is almost over and so he seeks the Lord in order to know, and to discern, how to properly respond..... I mean Daniel is looking all around him, the state of the world, the state of God’s people, and he’s reading scripture - about God’s promise to work and move powerfully - and he’s is entering into that work of redemption through prayer pleading with God for mercy, for renewal, for restoration for Jerusalem...
3. This is to be the posture of the Creative Minority - to know and discern the heart of God as we read scripture, as we cultivate his presence in our life and in our midst (God’s mercy, renewal, and redemption) and then to pray that for our cities, for our neighborhoods, and then not just to pray it, but to act it out...
  1. *“Seeking the Kingdom means embodying God’s renewing power in politics and citizenship, economics, and business, education and scholarship, family and neighborhood, media and art, leisure and play. It is not just that we carry out evangelism in these areas of life. This is important but not enough. It means that the way we live as citizens, consumers, students, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and friends witnesses to the restoring power of God.” - Michael Goheen, The Drama of Scripture*
  2. We don’t just pray - Your kingdom come, Your will be done - but we see, ourselves, the church, as enacting and incarnating that kingdom life and presence.
  3. *“The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as ‘Christians’ will become*

*disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.” - Dallas Willard, The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*

**2. Closing: A Creative Minority is outward facing, looking at the world with incredible hope because of Gods redemption through Jesus..**

As God's people, those who have been redeemed by Jesus, we are called to bring the redemption of God to bear upon the world around us as we have opportunity - We obviously can't do everything - but what is one way that you can begin living a life of Redemptive Participation??

1. Ask: God, how can I participate in your work? To be a voice of truth, to be intercessor, to be a bearer of mercy, to be hands that help and heal, to be an emotional, or monetary support to those hurting around me..
2. As you look around our community and interact with its citizens Ask: Jesus where do you want to be? Where do you want to bring redemption? Jesus bring me into what you are already doing (Uncle Chuck story?)
3. I truly believe this has to start with each of us personally - it starts in my heart, with my rhythms, with my priorities, in my finances, around my table, in my family, with my kids... and from there it grows, it spreads and produces fruit..it has to start somewhere.
  1. *“Only God can handle the whole world. The World is not ours to manage or to save. Our task is to focus on our individual callings in engaging with the world, to trust that others are following theirs too, and to leave to God the masterminding of the grand outcome.” - Os Guinness, Renaissance*

**Prayer:** *Oh God of such truth as sweeps away all lies, of such grace as shrivels all excuses. Come now to find us for we have lost ourselves in the shuffle of disguises and the rattle of empty words. Let your Spirit move mercifully to re-create us from the chaos of our lives. We have been careless of our days, of our loves, our gifts, our chances. Our prayer is to change, oh God, not out of despair of self, but for love of you, and for the*

*selves we long to become before we simply waste away. Let your mercy  
move in and through us now. Amen. Ted Loder, My Heart in my mouth*