

Sermon Transcript from August 21st, 2016
Redemptive Participation
Pastor Dave Lomas, Reality San Francisco

So, the text today will be Jeremiah 29:4-7, Daniel 2:1-7, Daniel 6:1-13, Daniel 9:1-6 and Daniel 9:17-19. And then they will read these Scriptures.

[Scripture reading]

Jeremiah 29:4-7: "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'"

Daniel 2:1-19: "In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, he said to them, 'I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means.'

"Then the astrologers answered the king, 'May the king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.'

"The king replied to the astrologers, 'This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me.'

"Once more they replied, 'Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.'

"Then the king answered, 'I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me the dream, there is only one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me.'

"The astrologers answered the king, 'There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrology. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among humans.'

"This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.

"When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. He asked the king's officer, 'Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?' Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.

"Then Daniel returned to this house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. During the night, the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven."

Daniel 6:1-13: "It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were

unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'

"So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: 'May King Darius live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.' So King Darius put the decree in writing.

"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: 'Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?'

"The king answered, 'The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.'

"Then they said to the king, 'Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.'"

Daniel 9:1-6: "In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

"I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:

"'Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.'"

Daniel 9:17-19: "'Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.'"

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[End scripture reading]

Thank you. That is the Word of the Lord. I hope that you noticed a thread through the reading if you were paying attention. I know you were. The thread of Jeremiah sending word to Babylon. "Seek the peace of the city. Pray for the city. Pray for peace." And Daniel's entire life, all of it being one of prayer. When things happen, he goes to his friends and prays. When there's a law against praying, he prays. At the end of his life, he reads Jeremiah and it leads him to pray again. That's the Word of the Lord.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we look at the Scriptures this morning, we ask for divine revelation, we ask that our hearts would burn within us, that we would be changed from the inside out, that the things that we do and the practice of listening to Scriptures and responding to Scriptures as Daniel did in Daniel 9 would form us into Your people, would remove from us the things that bind us, that hold us from being Your ambassadors in this city and would free us to live into our calling as people loyal to Jesus Christ in San Francisco. Teach us how to do that. Show

us ways. Inspire us this morning. We need it, Lord.

A lot of us have come in here just so beat from a week. Just one week. From last communion to this communion we're just so beat up by work and life and tragedy and heartbreak and a lot of us even beat up by success. It's gone to our heads and we think that we are what people say about us and it's destroying us, God. So, we need a reorientation today of all of our loves towards You, God. So, give us that, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. What gave Daniel the strength and the vision and the fortitude and the resolve and the resilience – as we read just a swath of Daniel and some of Jeremiah – to live in Babylon as a faithful witness to God? And, this is another thing about Daniel too, he was a good citizen of Babylon. So, he was a faithful witness to God as a good citizen of Babylon over a lifetime. How do you do that? Daniel lived in exile. My point over the course of this series has been we live in exile and we should learn and can learn from Daniel's life how to live in exile.

So, what does that mean? I mean, we've been saying that for the last few weeks. We also live in exile. But, what does that really mean? I'm going to do a little theology here. So, just take notes. Don't tune out. Just pay attention, take notes and hopefully you'll understand this. There are two major movements in the Old Testament as it pertains to the life in the land. Some scholars argue three. I'll just break it down as two. It's easier and easier to understand. There's promised land and exile. Promised land and exile. As it pertains to Israel and the land and how the people of God lived in land, there were two main movements. Promised land and exile.

The promised land paradigm is basically the exodus movement. It starts in the exodus and it goes to and through to the period of the kings. It starts when the children of Israel are in bondage to Egypt and God punishes Egypt. With a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, He delivers His people while crushing Egypt the enemy. Egypt is the bad guy; Israel is the good guy. Very clear and cut.

God then leads His people into the land of milk and honey; into the promised land. On the way to the promised land, God gives them victories over their enemies. He also creates a nation out of Israel. Israel actually becomes a nation. He gives them law and order. He gives them an economy. He gives them rules of farming and how they are to keep their land and how they are to interact and how to live and relate as a nation. Israel is then moving toward being a dominant culture. They're moving toward being, literally, a dominant culture. They dominate in the promised land for the purpose of being a light to the nations to show what God is like.

So, they finally get to Jerusalem. They have a king, they build a temple and a palace and they are a legitimate nation. But then, due to their unfaithfulness, there's a dramatic shift with their life in the land. It completely changes. It goes into the exile paradigm. Due to Israel's disobedience for generations, they are taken into exile. The temple is destroyed, people are captured, the majority of Israel is made to live under the rule of another nation. No longer do they rule themselves under God. No longer does the king of Israel represent God and is supposed to rule the nation rightly. Another dominant culture rules them. The way of life and the way of law and the way that they were to treat the land is now vastly different because they don't live in the promised land anymore. They are strangers in a strange land. That's what exile means.

They lived in exile and it changed the way they lived dramatically. Jeremiah wrote a letter in Jeremiah 29. He wrote a letter to the exiles giving them divine instructions on how they are to live life being faithful to God as exilic people. Jeremiah writes a letter saying, "This is how you are to live in Babylon and you are to live this way until God restores all things; until heaven and earth is restored. Until the great day of the Lord comes, this is how you are to live."

So, what's my point in saying all of that theological, Old Testament stuff? The book of Daniel won't have formative power in our lives unless we come to grips with the reality that we live as exiles and not in the promised land. I think most of us think that we live in promised land. And this is not as easy as you think to live in exile versus living in the promised land. The promised land paradigm has been deeply formative to our nation. It actually still very much is deeply formative in our nation. This paradigm is about people who left where they were from – and this is not everyone, but a large majority of people that make up America – around the world to come to this nation for the promised opportunity of a better life.

Again, that's not everyone. Some people were forced here against their will. But, a giant

majority of people moved to this country for the promise of better opportunity. Under our nation's ideology, God is the one who is the giver of the blessing of our nation. "God bless America," we say. And, in promised land thinking, we believe in the myth of progress that we will have a better life. We believe in technology. We'll make a better future. No questions asked. So, under the promised land, we want progress no matter who is to be enslaved during our progress, no matter what we do with our environment on the way to progress, no matter how we treat animals on the way to progress. We just want progress. It doesn't matter.

So, we gentrify cities and we build better homes and better cars and we move to the suburbs or we move to the city if we can have the life we want in the city; if we can afford it anyway. In the promised land world, under the promised land ideology, we try to create a perfect world to live in. We want a perfect world. We want to live in a subculture that keeps me safe from harm and people that might kill my vibe or something or bum me out or ruin a perfect life for my kids. We want to move from that. The filth in our city makes us sick. And it doesn't make us sick because it makes God sick or breaks God's heart, it makes us sick because it bums us out. We just smell the smells and we're like, "This really bums me out. I just don't like the smell and I want it to smell better. I'm going to live in a better neighborhood with parking because I'm tired of just walking everywhere. I want to live with cleaner streets. I want walkable coffee places where I live. I don't want my street too loud, but I want it kind of full of life and I want the sun to come out in the summer. I want..."

And we slip into promised land thinking. "I live in the promised land. I deserve the best life."

But, what we said last week and what I want to reiterate is this is not the promised land and this is not the Kingdom of God. If you are a follower of Jesus, if you're a Christian, you are in exile. You are here from another, better country to bring shalom of that better country to bear on this one. Jeremiah puts it like this: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace, you will find peace."

This is a – and I don't want you to miss how big of a movement this is in God's story. This is huge. This is probably the way the people of God, after Jeremiah 29, are to live, period, until Jesus comes back and renews all things. He says to people like Daniel living in Babylon, "You are not in the promised land anymore. You are in exile and I put you there and I want you to seek the shalom of that city. I want you to pray for that city. I want you to be so bound up with this city that when you pray for the city's shalom or peace, if that city starts to have shalom, you will have shalom. But, if the city doesn't have shalom, you won't have shalom. You're going to bind yourself so deeply to this city that the problems of this city are going to be your problems and you will have to do something about it."

Exile living is a completely different way of living. It's a completely different way of thinking about life. It demands something of God's people that's completely unlike promised land vision. Exiled people know they don't live in the promised land and they are not promised a perfect life here on earth. Exilic people go, "I'm not promised perfection here on this earth."

Exile people live for something else and they exist for something else. Exilic people know, "We live in a world of tremendous need and where we're meant to be a representative of a different kind of life to that need. We represent a different set of hopes to our world. We represent a different vision of what it means to be human with a different capacity to love our city."

When we live with that understanding and meet the person that's hard to love in our neighborhood or at work or on the street, or we face the impossible situation in our city that is causing so much heartache and violence, we don't think, "I have to get out of here. This city is going to crap. It's just horrible."

We don't think that. Because we're exilic people, when we see brokenness, we at that moment realize, "It is to this very thing that I have been called. I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be. I'm supposed to show up to love in unexpected ways with wisdom and hope that's not of this world. I'm meant to be here. So, the brokenness of this city, I'm meant to be here. I'm not supposed to go and create this subculture of whatever in the mountains somewhere. I'm supposed to be right in the very middle of it bringing to bear the kingdom on this place."

Exile paradigm versus the promised land paradigm is so important to understand. We have been calling this exilic way of life "being a creative minority." Here's the definition for what that means:

"A creative minority is a Christian community in a web of stubbornly loyal relationships knotted together in a living network of persons in a complex and challenging cultural setting..." – that's exile – "...who are committed to practicing the way of Jesus together for the renewal of the world."

It's this kind of vision that goes, "I need my community and we need to be completely loyal to practice the way of Jesus together in this very, very exilic, complex, challenging cultural setting that is San Francisco because we represent a better country that's hoping that that breaks into our city."

And we're learning from Daniel's life what this looks like. So, specifically today, I want to answer this question – or try to answer this question. I don't know if I will, but I'll try. How did Daniel redemptively participate as a citizen of Babylon? How did he redemptively participate as a citizen of Babylon? What did he do? That's the question that I want to answer with the remainder of our time this morning. What did it look like for Daniel to seek the shalom of Babylon, as Jeremiah wrote to him and to them?

Well first, the first redemptive participation has to be rooted in non-participation for the life of an exile. I said this last week. I must repeat it. It bears repeating. You have to hear this. You have to know this. Our redemptive participation has to be rooted in non-participation for the life of an exile. What I mean by this is what we talked about last week with the three friends quietly not participating in the civic worship of Babylon. This is Daniel asking not to eat from the king's table in Daniel 1. This is Daniel in Daniel 6, as we read today, praying to God with his face towards Jerusalem three times a day even though it was against the law. We can't redemptively participate in our culture until we know the points where we must draw the line in non-participation. We have to go, "I'm going to root myself in practices of ways I don't participate in the culture, and only then can I have the perspective of how I actually engage in this culture."

Another way of saying it – a way better way of saying it – from a book that I quoted last week, "Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City," he says this:

"Intentional disengagement from the dominant culture is the necessary precondition for a meaningful engagement of that same dominant culture."

So, intentional disengagement from the dominant culture. Our dominant culture is, I would say, American individualism. We have to disengage from that culture. That's a necessary precondition for meaningful engagement in that same dominant culture. If we were to engage in the dominant culture which is American individualism, if we're to bring peace here, we must start with ways that we will not participate or how we'll disengage from this culture. And this has everything to do, guys – to be your pastor right now – with fidelity and piety. This has everything to do with holiness. That's the biblical word for it. Of being holy. As people whose loyalty lies with Jesus Christ, we will not – and we must say this with our mouths and with our lives. We will not participate in the way our culture uses sex, money and power.

Last week, when I said that the three friends politely and quietly practiced non-participation, this is what I was talking about. They said with their lives, "We will not participate in our culture's idols or our culture's gods or what our culture worships."

And what we will find when we don't participate is that our non-participation will give us a more powerful life and voice to redemptively participate. I can't stress that enough. When we non-participate, when we disengage, it gives us power and prophetic unction and prophetic power and prophetic voice to speak into the culture. Most of us lack the power for meaningful engagement in our culture because we don't really know what separates us from the city. We don't know. If I was to say, "Sir, what separates you from the city?"

We have been colonized by our culture and, therefore, we are not a prophetic voice anymore. There is nothing that makes us strange, that causes people to question or ask questions about our lives. There's nothing anymore. What do you do that's different? What do you believe that's different? I think we have to start where the early Church started in Rome. That was a place very much like America; the dominant culture.

The early Church used power, money and sex differently than everyone else did. This is the way the early Church subverted Rome. It's what gave them cultural traction and cultural teeth to speak powerfully and prophetically into their culture. And Daniel lived this very peculiar life inside the walls and the halls of power in Babylon for most of his life. He saw three different kings and two different kingdoms come through Babylon under the rule of King

Darius, as we read in chapter 6.

We see that Daniel had such a practiced faithfulness to God that the only way to accuse Daniel and try to destroy Daniel's life was if they tried to make Daniel's faithfulness illegal. They're like, "How do we nail this guy? He's above reproach. There's nothing he does. The way he treats people, what he does in his free time, how he manages his money, how he treats the opposite sex, how he treats the same sex. Nothing. We've gone through everything and there's nothing we can accuse him with. The only thing we can accuse him with is worshipping Yahweh. That's it. So, how about we do this: we make worshipping Yahweh illegal. And then we know there's no way he's going to not worship God. There's no way. He's going to show up to pray. And when we do, that's when we'll get him. That's when he'll break the law."

I mean, can you think of that? Like, someone combing through your life and going, "The only thing that we find in them is that they love Jesus."

I mean, we kind of laugh but like, "Oh, yeah. No. They would easily find stuff. I mean, just look at my Facebook. They'd find stuff really fast. Like, the last week on my timeline."

But, that's kind of it. That's kind of us. We kind of live that way. Daniel didn't. Daniel didn't live this way. I mean, he lived a life that was literally set apart, that was holy, inside the halls of power. So, the end of point one is non-participation. Like, that's point one. That's important. Non-participation's important.

But, another way Daniel lived into redemptive participation was by living a practiced way of life. This is, again, really important. He lived under a rule of life that included fixed-hour prayer. He lived under a rule of life that included fixed-hour prayer. He turned to God three times a day in prayer his whole life so he can fix his mind and heart and his intentions on God. Every day his whole life until he was in his 70s, every day, three times a day so that he can fix his mind and his heart and his intentions on God.

It says in Daniel 6:10, "**Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published,**" – when Daniel learned that it was illegal to pray to any god unless you prayed through Darius, he went home, upstairs, opened his windows toward Jerusalem, bowed down and prayed to God. As soon as he heard it was signed he was like, "Oh, it's signed? Alright. I know what I've got to do."

He just goes and he kneels down and he prays. And he opens his windows toward Jerusalem. Why? When Israel lived in exile, they were to direct their hearts and minds and bodies towards Jerusalem, lest they forget Jerusalem. They were not to forget Jerusalem. This was to orient them towards a kingdom coming and a kingdom promised. "There is a kingdom coming and there is a kingdom promised and I'm going to orient my physical body that way."

We, as followers of Jesus, are told and taught the same thing by Jesus. Jesus says, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Seek first the Kingdom. Like, orient all of your heart and all of your mind and all of your actions towards the Kingdom of God. Orient yourself. And I would say orient yourself three times a day. You're like, "That's religious."

Get over it. Whatever. I don't care. Like, how is your formula working? "I'm just going to, whenever I feel like praying, I'm going to pray."

How's that working for you? It's not. Let me tell you. It's not. When every single day you wake up like, "I'm orienting my heart."

Jesus taught us to pray. "When you pray, pray like this: Our Father in heaven."

Who is God? He's my Father. And where is He? In heaven. I'm orienting my heart there. And then it says, "And then pray this."

See, we always start with our prayer requests first. But, no, no. "Our Father in heaven, holy is Your name. Hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

What is that? I'm orienting my heart towards Jerusalem. I'm orienting my heart towards

heaven. I'm going there. That's where I'm orienting. All of my mind and my heart and my actions, I am orienting it there. This is what we're called to do as Christians. To pray. To orient our minds and our hearts and our lives. This is the kind of orientation that we need, and it's not just daily. I'd say we need it three times a day, if not more times a day.

Ash and I – and I share this story because I've asked Ashley to share it, my wife, and because I've been here a million times. But, she said I can share it, so I'm going to share it. Ash and I just got back from traveling in July and we spent time in one of our favorite places on earth to get away to, Kauai, and then went to London for a prayer tour. And we lived this time very intentionally. We lived our time in the month of July with holy intent. Everything we did, every papaya we ate, we did with holy intent. I'm not joking. We would wake up in the morning and seek God together. We were reading through this book and we would spend like two to three hours every morning talking about everything. From things that God's done in the church the last seven years to even patterns we've developed in our marriage over the last twelve or thirteen years... something like that.

Patterns we've developed. And then we'd pray and then the rest of our day, everything that we did it felt like we were doing with holy intent. Like giving thanks for all. It was beautiful. And then we go to London and we wake up and we're in London for a prayer tour because we're planting a church there and we wake up and go to devotionals and our hearts would be oriented towards God and then we'd walk the streets of London and pray for the peace and the shalom and then we were ministering to the Chadicks and I saw my wife come to life. Like, I saw her alive like I've never seen. Her eyes were open and I mean like to people in the world and her place as a Christian, placed in this world by God on His mission. That sort of stuff.

And then we get home and it took eight days. Eight days of full-time work and one weekend that she worked to suck all the life out of her where she was waking up – and I say this because we've talked about it and this has been me a million times, but probably more gross because it's in ministry. Where she woke up to get through her day. She woke up for the intent of coming home from work to have a glass of wine to get to bed at a decent hour to wake up to do it all over again. Has anyone ever been there? Like, "What are you doing?"

I'm just trying to get through today. Because tonight, I need to unwind. Like, there's a great new series on Netflix. You know what I'm talking about. And I need wine and I need to unwind and that's what I need to do. And I'm living for that. Why? So I can go to bed early and wake up and do it again tomorrow. And there is no orientation. And I've been there a million times. Do you see why we need something like fixed-hour prayer to awaken our hearts to God in who we are and why we're here? We need this. We need to wake up. There was a moment when I saw it and I was kind of there too last week and, I don't know, God just did something where we were eating dinner and we looked at each other and we're like, "No. This is not why we're here. We can live like this way cheaper and with a bigger house in Bakersfield with air conditioning and a pool."

We're from there, by the way. That's why. We don't have to live here like this here. We don't have to do that. Like, that's not what we're here for. If we want to live that sort of existence, we can do it in a lot more comfortable of a place than here. That's not what we're here for. Let's awaken our hearts to why we're here again. Let's fix our heart and mind on Christ again.

But, this prayer wasn't just orienting prayer for Daniel. This was a prayer as resistance. This was prayer as resistance. This was punk rock prayer. This was like – look what it says in Daniel 10. Literally. "When Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he prayed."

"Oh, it's illegal to pray? Guess what I'm going to go do? Pray."

And I kind of feel like he swung the doors open a little harder that day, right? Like, windows, bam! Like a Disney movie or something. It was resistance. Daniel guarded his spiritual practices with tenacity and rebellion. He's like, "I will pray to my God. I will worship my God. I will be devoted to my God alone even if it's illegal."

Now, here's the thing: I wonder how easy it is for our schedule to bump off our spiritual practices. And I know at this point I'm just really drawing the knife in. You're like, "You already hurt me. What are you doing?"

I mean, for us, it doesn't even take law for us to stop praying. All it takes is some other

obligation. Not even against the law. Just some other obligation. We're so lame this way. Like, "I couldn't go to worship with the people of God because I 'had' this other commitment. I had to go. I had to go. I couldn't pray because I had to be at work early. I had to be there. I couldn't be generous to that missionary this year because I had to pay off debt."

What does it take? Let me say, it almost takes nothing to bump you off of spiritual practices. Nothing. It just takes you getting busy or distracted. That's it. Spiritual disciplines of prayer and Sabbath-keeping and fasting and generosity and Sunday worship are acts of resistance. They're acts of not just orientation, but resistance. And these practices are the seedbed for a life of redemptive participation in our world. We cannot participate. We will not have the backbone or the energy or the vision to participate in our world unless we have these things.

Again, from "Artists, Citizens, Philosophers," the writer says this:

"The Church is God's body in the world. It is present to bring about the well-being [shalom] of the city where it dwells. The advice of Jeremiah to pray to the Lord on behalf of the city in which it lives is not a call for passivity; to let God act while the Church watches and waits. Genuine prayer requires becoming intoxicated, consumed by God, becoming so filled with the Spirit of God that the Church can become and agent of God's action in the world. To pray genuinely to God for the welfare of the city is to yearn with all one's heart for its well-being. To pray means to weep with God when the city chooses the way of death, to pronounce judgment, to yearn for, urge, and then act with the compassion of God that the city may choose the way of life."

When you hear quiet, fixed-hour prayer or quiet non-participation, please don't hear, "Quiet complacency." That is not what I'm talking about. There are many times where what it means to be a follower of Jesus is to act and to speak up for the shalom of the city. We need more radical faithfulness, not less radical faithfulness. So, how do we then – the last point – redemptively participate as a creative minority in this city?

So, I want to give you a few different paradigms that work towards this end, and I think they're helpful. A few different paradigms. The first one is from the book I've been quoting, "Artists, Citizens, Philosophers." He encourages us to seek the peace of the city redemptively means to be philosophers, citizens and artists in our city. And this is how he explains this, and I hope this maybe just inspires something in you.

First of all, as philosophers. He says, "We have to be philosophers. We have to be people who love wisdom, especially the wisdom of God. And with wisdom, discern what is true and what is right and what is good and creatively bring that to bear on our culture."

We need philosophers in the finance industry who will bring the wisdom of God to bear on a world driven by capitalism and consumerism. And these people need to work inside capitalism and consumerism to help people see what is right and good, not just what's profitable and successful. We need philosophers in finance. But, we also need philosophers in technology. That is, thinking through not just what technology can do for us, but what technology is doing to us. What is it doing to us? Philosophers in technology that are helping people not just to think through what the public wants, but how do we become the kind of people who want the right kind of things as the public? That's the kind of philosophers we need in technology.

And he says, "We need to be philosophers, but we also need to be citizens."

As citizens, what is our role in San Francisco and how do we exercise our responsibility in seeking the good of the human community as well as the well-being of the earth? How are we good citizens here? We need to be citizens that tie our peace to the peace of the city. If the city is unrest, we're in unrest too. And we beg God for peace. And then we pray and then we get to work at making things right.

The third one he says – and this is my favorite – is artists. And I want God to call artists. We have to do all of this as artists. And what he means by that is we need to inspire a better future. I can't think of a better example of this than Martin Luther King Jr. He was a philosopher, he was a true citizen, but what he did is he did this in a way where he imagined a better world and then he spoke into our world with his beauty. He spoke into this world with beauty. So, he expressed a cultural vision in an excellent way. His letter from Birmingham Jail and his "I have a dream" speech are flat out works of art. They're works of art and they draw the heart upward. They're like, "I believe in this."



He used poetry and image and metaphor and Gospel song in a way that captured the heart and the imagination. So, he fought the racial injustice of his day, not just as a philosopher, someone who loves the wisdom of God and bringing the wisdom to God to bear on the world, not as a citizen of America, but also as an artist that painted a way where his speeches are enduring. You read them now and you get emotional. They're beautiful. We need to imagine a better future and then, as artists, lead the way through beauty.

He said in a letter from the Birmingham Jail, "Human progress never rolls on the wills of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be coworkers with God. And, without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively in the knowledge that time is always ripe to do right."

We have to use our time creatively. This is what it means to be a creative minority. Earlier this year, I heard a podcast that was reviewing the new Chance the Rapper album. This podcast was called "The Watch" and it's a cultural podcast on culture. They were just talking about this album, right? Chance the Rapper. You might be familiar with it. Anyway, it's absolutely incredible. It's called "Coloring Book." And, throughout this hip-hop album, he draws on the Gospel. He draws on the Gospel as a topic and a genre of music. There's even a part at the end of the album, in a song called "Drown," where the end of the lyrics – it's not on the screen. I just thought of this on the way over here and I just had to say it.

The last part of the lyrics say, "Like everything is everything..." – which is a little nod to Lauryn Hill, but that's a whole different sermon – "...like all them days He prayed for me..." – speaking of God.

Then she says, "Like emptiness was tamed in me."

That lyric emotionally just grabs me every time. "Like everything is everything, like all them days He prayed with me, like emptiness was tamed in me."

And then it goes, "And all that was left was His love. And all that was left was His love."

And it keeps going like that and then this Gospel choir kicks in and then Kirk Franklin, the Gospel singer, says, "Chance, let me in. I have something to say."

And then he goes on this Gospel – we'll play it at the end of the service. It's incredible. And he talks about how Jesus is the only one to quench our thirst. Jesus is the only one. Okay, so, this album – this album is so good. So, I'm listening to this podcast and this is what he says:

"This dude makes religion sound fantastic. I don't know if I encountered that sort of relationship with something that I don't have in art that makes me envious of having it in that way. I listen to Chance rap about his life and he loves being a Christian and I'm like, 'That sounds interesting. Maybe that's something I'll look into,' and I did not expect to ever say that."

Then the guy who's interviewing with him sounds nervous and is like, "Yeah. I didn't expect you to say that either."

And then he says, "I was really moved by this album. I feel like I'm gaining my religion here. I'm really moved by this record."

To live in such a way where the things that we create make people question like, "What is that? Like, you make me want to learn about a relationship with God."

Philosophers, citizens and artists. That's a great way to think about redemptive participation. Another way is through one of my heroes, Henri Nouwen. He says that this is the way that we live in the world: taken, blessed, broken, given. This is the pattern of Christ. He says, "On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He had taken bread and He held it up to heaven and He blessed it and He said, 'This is my body given for you.' And then He broke it and then He gave it to them."

Then, Henri Nouwen says, "This is the pattern of our Lord and this is the pattern that we are to live by."

We are to see ourselves, as Christians, given for the life of the world. You are placed here in San Francisco for the life of the world. You are here for the life of the world. You are bread to the world. So, that means your life has been taken. Or, another way of looking at that is chosen by God. You have been chosen by God. You belong to God. Your life is then blessed by God and you're blessed to be a blessing. And then you're broken. Your frailties, your sufferings are what make you you. And we don't, as Christians, try to cover up our imperfections and flaws.

In some beautifully perfect, imperfect way, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:7, that it's through the brokenness of our lives that the surpassing greatness of Christ shines. I don't even understand that. It's like when you show up to the world broken, Christ has a way of shining through the brokenness and the cracks of your lives to let the light out and show that the power is from God and not from us.

And then "given." My professor, Gerry Breshears, would say "placed." Like, Adam and Eve placed in the Garden of Eden. You are given, your life is given, to be salt and light in this world. A couple of weeks ago, I shared a quote with you from the Billy Graham crusade book I read that talked about how San Francisco is not like her namesake, Saint Francis. And it said this, here's the quote again:

"San Francisco has never known a kind of ordered Christian conscience. Thus, Saint Francis gave his name, but never his spirit, to the brawling, young city."

I shared that quote with you a few weeks ago. Now, I don't know if that is true necessarily. I can't speak to all of San Francisco. But, I know this: that we have the opportunity, as a creative Christian minority, to step into the way of Saint Francis here in this city. The way of Saint Francis has been described by a Franciscan scholar as this: the radically unprotected life; a life that's cruciform in shape.

It's this kind of life. This is going to be really weird. Everyone just open. Do this. Everyone. Even if you hit your neighbor. Do that. Okay, now, don't talk and do that. You don't have to open your mouths. This is the life we live towards San Francisco. This unprotected, vulnerable life. Saint Francis lived – you can put your hands down now. Saint Francis lived an open, vulnerable and given life. Like, a lot of us live just closed off to our neighbors, to our coworkers, to our world. We just live closed off. We live sheltered, closed off lives. And the life of a Christian is a given life. Christ has given you for the world. Given you. And it's to live dangerously open, revealing all that we are in our brokenness and receiving all of the pain and the sorrow the world will give back in return. All of it.

Christ has given us to the world as ambassadors of reconciliation. That's why you're here. This is how Paul the Apostle puts it in 2 Corinthians:

"If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ..." – listen – "...and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them."

Are you kidding me?

"And he has committed to us..." – listen. God commits to you and us the message. And that message is not just speech. It's life. The message of reconciliation.

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."

This is what it means to be radically open to the world. Like, I am given for the life of the world. My life is given. Your life is here, given for the life of the world. You are given. And I just think there's something about – it sounds silly to say – that God trusts us with His message. That He trusts you with His message. That you are His ambassador. Therefore, let's live into this great call that we have from God our Savior. Amen?

Lord, thank You. Make us this, Lord, we pray. Do this in our hearts as we respond to You, God. As we respond in ways of repentance because of things that we've done and lived that we're just so sorry and we just feel like we have to get that out. Like, "Sorry, God. Sorry I haven't done this. Sorry. And I repent. I turn. I recognize that I haven't done this."

And there's some of us that need to confess that today. Confession's so good for the

soul. "I have not done this. Forgive me, God."

And then may You send us out in power. Empower us, Lord. I can't imagine just seeing all of these lives vulnerably open to the life of this world. Given for the life of this world. We don't live in the promised land and we say, "Kingdom come."

We cannot wait, Jesus, until You make all things new; until heaven and earth are married. We cannot wait for that to happen. But, until then, help us live as faithful people in this world. In Jesus' name, amen.