**Sermon Notes – Sunday 6th February**

**Session 4 – ‘Exile and Peace’**

Listen or watch on YouTube Simon and Garfunkel’s song, ‘Sound of Silence’ and consider the themes of darkness/exile/silence in the lyrics. Does this song written over 50 years ago still resonate today?

Despite great advances in science and technology. Experts have dubbed our time ‘the age of anxiety’. How do we see this played out in our world today? How do we deal with our anxiety? What makes you feel anxious?

Is real peace a possibility?

Watch the video by Andrew Ollerton (7 mins) that summarises the big story of the Bible and its relevance to our lives.

* What are your initial reactions to the film? What stood out for you?
* In what sense are we all living away from home, in a state of exile? How might we experience that sense of exile in our everyday lives (a sense of disconnect from the world around us?)?
* During the era of the judges and kings, Israel got stuck in negative cycles. What patterns of behaviour in our lives rob us of peace? How can we end these negative cycles?
* Read Jeremiah 25:8-14. In the 6th Century BC, the Israelites experienced the darkness of exile. When have you faced seasons of suffering and pain?
* How have you or people you know experienced God’s presence in and through the storms of life?
* Read Daniel 1:1-21. Despite exile, Daniel shows that God’s people can ‘win away from home’. What specific practise can help us stand strong in a hostile culture?
* Overall, how has the Bible’s story of exile and peace helped to make sense of life today?

Response: Write out some of the things that threaten your peace today. Read Isaiah 43:1-7 and pray together for God’s peace to come into your situation.

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