

Evolving Church :: Amidst the Powers – A Benediction
Prepared and led by Empire Remixed
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Introduction (Narrator)

Powers! They're everywhere!
 Principalities and powers,
 rulers, dominions, thrones.

All created good.
 All created with rich and life-giving potential.
 All created for shalom.

Yet all so demonically distorted.
 All so debased as forces of death.
 All so hell-bent on domination.

"The key pathology of our time,
 which seduces us all,
 is the reduction of the imagination
 so that we are too numbed,
 satiated and co-opted
 to do serious imaginative work."

Seduction
 reduction
 numbness
 satiation
 co-opted
 the pathology of a captive imagination

Creative powers of liberation
 seducing and reducing us.
 Enlivening powers of creativity
 rendering us numb.
 Stewardly powers of loving care
 co-opting us in consumer satiation.

So how do we sing the Lord's song
 when the powers have dominated the airwaves?
 How do we sing the Lord's song
 when the principalities have captured our imaginations?
 How do we sing the Lord's song
 when our hearts are full of fear?
 How do we sing the Lord's song
 when our eyes are full of tears?

Is there a word to be heard
 in the midst of our exile?
 Is there a word that can give hope
 in the face of our captivity?
 Is there a word that can stand before
 the deceitful words of the powers?

Is there a song that can still be sung
 even in a foreign land?
 Is there a song that can be sung
 in a dangerous time?
 Is there a song that can be sung
 in the face of this weighty darkness?

Captive or liberated imaginations

that's the issue.

Is there a word of truth in the face of the lies?
Is there a song of power that will liberate our imaginations?

Is there a word of comfort in the midst of our confusion?
Is there a song of passion in the face of our numbness?

Is there a word of shalom in the midst of exile?
Is there a song of grace in the face of danger?

Listen to Jeremiah's letter to the exiles,
his word of hope to those lovers in a dangerous time.

"Lovers in a Dangerous Time" and Jeremiah 29 (Voice one and band)

While the band quietly plays "Lovers" Voice one reads Jeremiah (on screen), then the band morphs into the song (on screen)

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel,
to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile
from Jerusalem to Babylon:
Build houses and live in them;
plant gardens and eat what they produce.
Take wives and have sons and daughters;
take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage,
that they may bear sons and daughters;
multiply there, and do not decrease.
But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile,
... seek the shalom of the city ...
and pray to the Lord on its behalf,
for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

For thus says the Lord of hosts:
Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you,
and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.
For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,
plans for your welfare and not for your harm,
to give you a future with hope.
Jeremiah 29.4-7, 10-11

Bruce Cockburn "Lovers in a Dangerous Time"
Stealing Fire ©1984 Golden Mountain Music Corp.]

Don't the hours grow shorter as the days go by
You never get to stop and open your eyes
One day you're waiting for the sky to fall
The next you're dazzled by the beauty of it all
When you're lovers in a dangerous time
Lovers in a dangerous time

These fragile bodies of touch and taste
This vibrant skin -- this hair like lace
Spirits open to the thrust of grace
Never a breath you can afford to waste
When you're lovers in a dangerous time
Lovers in a dangerous time

When you're lovers in a dangerous time
Sometimes you're made to feel as if your love's a crime --
But nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight --
Got to kick at the darkness 'til it bleeds daylight
When you're lovers in a dangerous time
Lovers in a dangerous time

And we're lovers in a dangerous time
Lovers in a dangerous time

Responsive Litany (*all bold is congregational response*)

Voice two: On Screen

Who are you?

We are lovers in a dangerous time.

Where is the danger?

We are the church amidst the powers.

What are you looking for?

**Liberated imaginations,
lives of shalom.**

So what's the problem?

**When you're lovers in a dangerous time
sometimes you're made to feel as if your love's a crime.**

Voice three:

It is criminal to close down your options
in a world of infinite choice.

It is criminal to say 'enough'
in a world of more.

It is criminal to love your enemy
in a world at war.

It is criminal to give yourself freely
in a world where everything has its price.

When you're lovers in a dangerous time
sometimes you're made to feel as if your love's a crime
nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight
got to kick at the darkness till it bleeds daylight

Voice two: Off screen

How?

how do we kick at the darkness?
how do we live in the midst of empire?
how do we live in Babylon?
how do we live in exile?
how do we kick at the powers that have enslaved us?

Voice one:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel to all the exiles ...
build houses and live in them
plant gardens and eat what they produce
take each other as husband and wife
have children
multiply in all of your ways and do not decrease

Voice two:

Build houses in a culture of homelessness?
Plant gardens in polluted soil?
Get married?
Have children ... in this world?
Multiply ... in a world of debt?
That's it?
That's going to dethrone the powers?
But we want to kick at the darkness!

Voice three:

Dethrone the powers by redeeming them.
 Dethrone the powers by seeing them vanquished at the cross.

If the powers render you homeless, build homes.
 If the powers reduce sexuality to a commodity, enter into faithful covenant.
 If the powers rob you of your children, then take them back.
 If the powers create domination, then embrace sacrifice.
 If the powers despoil creation, then plant a garden.
 If the powers take away your wealth, then give away freely.
 All of this is 'kicking at the darkness until it bleeds daylight.'

On Screen

Refusing to be enslaved to the powers,
we are subjects of the Kingdom.
 Refusing their deathly domination,
we serve a Risen Lord.
 Refusing to bow the knee to idols,
we are children of the God of all creation.
 Refusing the false comfort of the powers,
we kick at the darkness until it bleeds daylight.

Kick at the darkness,
 seek the welfare of the city.
 Kick at the darkness,
 seek shalom.
 Kick at the darkness,
 spirits open to the thrust of grace.
 Kick at the darkness,
 rooted in grace.
 Kick at the darkness
 living in the light.

Kick at the darkness,
 with eyes wide open.
 Kick at the darkness,
 because the exile will be long.
 Kick at the darkness,
 because the darkness will not have the final word.
 Kick at the darkness,
 because the powers are taken captive at the cross.
 Kick at the darkness,
 because the light has come.

Voice one: *Off screen*
 I have plans for you,
 says the homemaking God
 I have plans for your shalom
 I have plans for your homecoming
 Call ... and I will hear
 Seek ... and I will be found
 Come ... and I will gather you
 Come ... and I will come to you

[A time of silence is kept]
Approximately 1.5mins

Voice two: *On screen*
 Who are you?
We are lovers in a dangerous time.
 Who are you?
Spirits open to the thrust of grace.

What do you want?

To seek the shalom of the city.

What do you want?

To redeem the powers in Jesus' name.

As we leave this place today, we confess together:

The cross,
we shall take it.

The bread,
we shall break it.

The pain,
we shall bear it.

The joy,
we shall share it.

The gospel,
we shall live it.

The love,
we shall give it.

The light,
we shall cherish it.

The darkness,
God shall perish it.

Christ the Son of Righteousness
shine upon you
and scatter the darkness
from before your path:
and the blessing
of God Almighty,
Creator, Redeemer and Comforter,
be among you,
and remain with you always.
Amen, thanks be to God.