

Prayer of the Week:

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities that may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, The Second Sunday in Lent)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Intro to Lament
Lamentations 1 (NLT)
February 28th

Intro

The book of Lamentations is a series of five lament poems written by an anonymous author in response to the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 587 BC.

During 1.5 years of warfare, suffering, and famine, the city was totally destroyed and the inhabitants taken to Babylon in exile.

The exile was, by far, the most horrific time in Israel's history. It was nothing short of a national tragedy that meant the loss of comfort, security, and identity. In other words, Lamentations doesn't exist in a vacuum. These poems emerge out of very real suffering.

The Value of Lament

Lament accomplishes at least three things:

1. Lament is form of protest: Lament lets the world (and God) know that which is not right. To lament is to name the pain, suffering, or injustice in our lives and in the lives of others.

2. Lament offers us a chance to express emotion: Lament offers us the opportunity to express anger, frustration, disappointment to God.

3. Lament offers us a chance to express confusion: Few things cause us to question the foundation of life more than suffering. When we suffer we ask questions about God's character, God's existence, and how the world is set up to run.

These poems show us that biblical story doesn't ignore suffering. In addition, these emotional poems give a sacred dignity to human suffering.

The First Poem

In the first poem, the city of Jerusalem is personified as a widow ("daughter of Zion"). Personification is popular in poetry because it helps to make intangible things more tangible.

The widow is simultaneously a sinful offender and a victim of sin. This incongruity points us to an important element we don't often consider in American evangelicalism; how victims of sin experience sin.

"Traditional theology has emphasized one-sidedly the sin of all people, while ignoring the pain of the victim. Western concepts of sin lead us to feel guilty when we do something bad, but we often do not have the language of shame when we are sinned against."

-Soong-Chan Rah, Prophetic Lament

We have language for when we are sinful. We even have language for the redemption and forgiveness of that sin. But, we have very little language to talk about the shame we feel when we are the victims of sin. Further, we don't

have language to talk about God's redemptive work over our shame.

The value of lament is to sit, if only for a while, with the reality of our sin AND the results of when we've been sinned against (and also how our sin has affected others).

We do this so that we can invite God's healing work of redemption in our lives. God's work is to release us from the guilt of sin AND rescue us from our shame.

"We are too busy patting ourselves on the back over the problem-solving abilities of the triumphant American church to cry out to God in lament. But lament cannot and must not be ignored. In the biblical world, hope does not emerge from the act of recounting our successes. It is the desperate plea for God's intervention that arises out of lament that reveals a flickering glimpse of hope."

-Soong-Chan Rah, Prophetic Lament