

Lament, longing and location

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[0 : 0 0] Now to the book of Psalms and chapter 106, and we can read at verse 4. Psalm 106 and at verse 4.

Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people. Help me when you save them, that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance, and so on.

Now I guess it's true that we all have a story to tell. And we have a story to tell because we are all on a journey. And our journey is very different, and therefore our story will be different.

But even though our story is different, there will be loads of similarities in our story because we are the people of God. And we see that in the Old Testament, we see it in the Bible, we see it in the story of the people of God.

They have a history. And at times, their history is not to be admired. But what is to be admired in the book of Psalms especially is the honesty with which the psalmist tells the story.

[1 : 3 1] And we see that in these two psalms, in Psalm 105 and 106. There's a story to be told. It's frank. It's honest. It tells all the details.

It shows the sins of the people. And it shows the salvation of God. And when we come to look at the psalm, because of the story itself, it is a psalm of lament.

There are things that the psalmist wished weren't through. There are things that the psalmist wished were through. And therefore, he takes his pen and he writes the psalm.

And we have it here for our benefit. Tonight, I want us to look at the first part of the psalm. And to see how the psalmist's story connects with our story.

And to see that this is the story of the people of God. And to see where our journey should take us as those who are gathered to worship God.

[2 : 3 5] What is our story? How does it bring us to God? And what will happen when we come into the presence of God? I want to see, first of all, that we have a lament.

And the lament is here because in the light of the call of the psalmist. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

He recognizes the need to give thanks to God. To give thanks to God because everything that he is and everything that he does, it is good.

And not just that it is good in an admirable kind of way that it is good to look at. But especially that everything that is good is good because it brings fulfillment.

Because it works out so that things find their own path and satisfaction in fulfillment. It's good in the sense that God says at the beginning of the Bible, when he had finished the work of creation, God saw everything that he had made, it was all very good.

[3 : 4 5] It was all according to design. And it was fully satisfied and fulfilled in accordance with that design. And so the psalmist calls on praise to God because that's the kind of God he is.

Everything that he does brings glory to his name. And it brings satisfaction for everyone and everything in which God is working.

And alongside of that, the psalmist calls the people to praise God because as that kind of good God, he is the covenant God of his people.

He calls upon them to give thanks to the Lord for his steadfast love and juice forever. He is the kind of God who is indeed the creator God.

But the highlight of their understanding of him is that all of his creative power, he has channeled into his relationship with them.

[4 : 49] And in his relationship with them, he is so committed to them that when I think about him, they marvel at his unchangeable goodness and they marvel at his unfailing love.

And in the entrance to the psalm, as in the entrance to our time of worship, we are called upon to praise this God because he is good and because his love is unfailing.

And if tonight we know anything about God and if we have faith in God and we are the children of God, we will know that he is good.

That everything that he gives to us is complete as he gives it to us and it is completely satisfying. And when we think of that, we marvel at his unfailing love that has followed us on our journey as we are writing our story.

And we want to praise God and we want to lift up his name. And it is in the light of that, that we need to praise and to recognize the goodness of God, that we find the psalmist's lament.

[6 : 07] He cannot do what he would like to do and he cannot do what he would like the people of God to do with him. And he launches into this question that highlights the fact that when it comes to professing God's name or confessing God's name or proclaiming his praise, he is just not able to do it.

Who, he says in verse 2, can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord or declare all his praise? He can almost touch the sense of gloom that comes over the psalmist.

He wants to praise, but he is so heavy that he cannot praise. And when the thought comes of praising this God, who can do that?

How can I do that? How can we do that? And so often on our journey as the people of God, we find it impossible to praise God.

Not because of God, but because of ourselves. Why was he unable to praise God? It was because along with the people of God, he had sinned.

[7 : 31] He had come short. He had fallen. Both we, he says in verse 6, and our fathers have sinned. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedness.

There is a sense of failure. And with a sense of failure comes the sense of guilt. Because they have transgressed against God. And instead of living a life devoted to God, there is a life lived where there is a breaking away from God.

And the God who has remembered them in his steadfast love, who has supplied them with all of his goodness, in contrast to him, they have not remembered.

They did not, in verse 7, remember the abundance of your steadfast love. They forgot who God was.

They forgot who they were. They forgot who they were. And because of their forgetfulness of God, and their wandering away from God, they find it impossible to praise.

[8 : 42] Do you feel like that tonight? Do you feel that your heart is heavy? Because you want to praise God, and you want to lift God up in your heart as well as on your lips.

But you find it so difficult to do that. And when you find it difficult to do that, there is a sense in your heart that you envy those who can.

Don't you want tonight to praise God? Don't you want in these days to proclaim the name of God? Don't you want to tell the world that your God is the Lord, that Christ is your Savior, that you love his name?

That's how the psalmist felt. He envied. Blessed are those who observe justice and do righteousness at all times.

He is face to face with the kind of person he is. And here is the kind of person that's to be envied. Someone who lives, who observes justice.

[9 : 58] Somebody who does righteousness at all times. Somebody who gives to God what God requires of him. And somebody who receives from God what God has promised to give.

And somebody who in their lives are living their lives in conformity to the law of God. And these are the ones who can praise God. And these are the ones who are to be envied with desire.

As if the psalmist were saying, oh, that I could be like this person. Tonight, if we are the people of God, we may indeed be heavy because of our sin.

We may indeed, as we ought to, see the beauty and the glory of all that our God does for us in Christ Jesus. But we will long to be what we're not.

We will desire to be different because we know that that person who is able to ascend to the will of God, whose hands are clean and whose heart is pure, we know that that's the kind of person we want to be.

[11 : 18] And that's the kind of person we want to be like. Tonight, is there that lament in your own heart? Because you know what God wants you to be.

You know what you want to be yourself. But you're so far from it. Surely you should lament. Because who can say tonight that we are what God requires us to be.

And indeed, if we are the children of God, which one of us could ever say that we are what we'd like to be. Because there is that sense of development and that sense of progress and that sense of desire to be what we're not.

As we continue in our journey of faith. There is a lament. Because we're not what God requires.

And we're not even what we would desire to be ourselves. Secondly, there is a longing.

[12 : 37] If I'm the child of God tonight and all of this is true, then there's a longing. There is something in my heart that's alive. And there is something in my heart that's alive for God.

And that's something in my heart that's alive for God. Wants to reach out to God. And if I have forgotten this God, I want this God to pay attention to me.

And I want him to remember me. And that tonight is the longing of the psalmist. That tonight is the longing of the people of God. Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people.

Remember me, O Lord, my Savior, as if he were saying, the Lord God who is my Savior, remember me. And he knows in his heart of hearts that the God who has steadfast love, whose love never fails, is also the God who is in the habit of remembering.

And who is in the habit of remembering, not the way you and I remember, as we go over things fondly in our minds, but the God who is habitually remembering his people in his covenant commitment to them.

[13 : 57] And so when God remembers, he remembers Israel, he sees Israel in Egypt, and he remembers his covenant, and he sent Moses to deliver them. God remembers, and God moves into action.

God moves into action to bring about what he has purpose to do. And when the psalmist is uttering this cry and giving expression to this longing, does the longing itself not tell us something about him?

Does the longing not tell us, first of all, that he understands this God is in the business of changing people from being what they are to what he wants them to be?

And when he cries out to God to remember him, he is doing so with that understanding. As if he was saying, Lord, my God, my Savior, I know that I'm not what you want me to be.

I know that I'm not what I want to be, but I know that you are the God who in your purposes and your plans and your covenant commitment to your people is in the business of making me and making all of them what they are not, so that they will be what you decide them to be, and so that they will be what you will delight in.

[15 : 25] He understands that much about God. And the other thing that he understands about God when he issues this cry, it is that this God will remember me.

Why should you remember me? Why should you remember him? Because the me tells us that this psalmist, this person, is somebody who is in the covenant, somebody who is in the kingdom, somebody who expects the covenant blessing of God.

And so he says, Lord, remember me, O Lord. My God, my covenant Savior, who is committed to my salvation, remember me.

And tonight, if you are the child of God, and if you are lamenting because of the way that you are, in your longing, you will want God to remember you.

And you know in your heart of hearts because of your relationship with God that God will do that. That that's his plan.

[16 : 37] And when you look at the story of the people of God in the Bible, that's what you see. And when you think of the story of your own faith, that's what you've experienced.

He remembers. He remembers what he has purpose to do. And when he remembers that, he comes and he changes things to align everything with his own purpose.

You know that. And you know that God has so changed you at the very beginning. And you know that God has so changed you on your journey until now.

And you want him to remember you once more. And when you're praying that prayer and when you're issuing that cry, you know that there is a special relationship between you and your God.

Why would you lament otherwise? Why would you miss him otherwise? Why would you want to be different if that's not the case? in your heart of hearts tonight.

[17 : 43] You know that you are the child of God. And because of that, you have this longing, this desire, and this prayer. Remember me, O Lord.

And of course, there are occasions, there are moments, there are times. God has a plan and God has a purpose and he works in accordance with that.

Remember me at a particular time and in a particular way. Remember me when you show favor to your people.

any other time, anything outside of that is in a sense meaningless because the great need at the moment is that God will remember him when he shows favor, when he shows his delight, when he gives expression to what is in his heart towards his people.

When he comes in the day of fulfilling his covenant commitment and his promises.

[19 : 05] Isaiah chapter 61 proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. The favor of God on his people.

The time of his appointment to come and to remember them and to show his delight in them and to show in them that there is a particular way in which he is going to rescue his people.

And that time of favor is especially true when God sends his son into the world. When you show favor to your people.

The day of salvation. The day of the Lord's favor. The year of the Lord's favor. Did not Jesus use the same words in Luke chapter 4?

Is it not all about what God is going to do in the Lord Jesus? Remember me when you come to show favor to your people. Whatever you are going to do in fulfilling your covenant commitment and sending the Lord Jesus into the world, whatever you are going to do in him remember me along with your people.

[20 : 31] Don't bypass me. And in the story of the people of God they were in exile from God and the year of his favor the time of his favor was to gather his people back to himself.

When you come to gather your people in close communion with yourself around yourself in the light with you when you come to do that remember me.

God is that not your longing tonight? You know that everyone else of the people of God that they have that longing in their hearts that God would so make his favor known to them and gather them around the person of his son as they go along to remember the death of the Lord Jesus.

you know that they are all deciding that but you are justly and rightly selfish because if you love the Lord with all of your heart as the psalmist did you will not be satisfied if he's going to remember everyone else but he's not going to remember you and tonight you are reaching out to him you are crying out to him to gather you from wherever you have wandered and to bring you close to the Lord Jesus to walk with him to be able to look at him to be able to rejoice with him to be able to have that gladness in your heart and when you're asking him to remember you you're not hesitating with concern as how he might do that your concern is simply that he will remember you and that he will bring you back to himself remember me oh

Lord and along with that and the whole goal of that is so that the remembering will lead to a personal encounter a closeness with God and that's what the psalmist goes on to cry out for help me when you come to save them help me that is come to visit me come to attend to my needs when you come to save them as God visited his people to bring them bread in the days of Ruth and Naomi and Bethlehem as the Lord visited Sarah when she had no children as the

[23 : 53] Lord visited Israel to bring them out of Egypt as the Lord visited the world when the Lord Jesus was born help me come and visit me when you come to save them when you come in the person of your son to perform this once for all defining moment in the history of your people as the Old Testament church were going back to that defining moment when they were taken out of Israel for us as the people of God tonight we are looking at that key defining moment in the birth and the death and the resurrection of God and all of the help and all of the visitation and all of the attention that we are looking for is what God does in coming in the person of his son with that fullness of his salvation and we know that the way in which the psalmist is reaching out to justice and righteousness we know that no one has ever reached that standard but

Jesus himself remember me help me when you come to save them and when he came to save them he came to save them through the righteous branch the Lord of righteousness says Jeremiah Jehovah said help me when you come to save them to do justice and righteousness that no one was doing but then he came and he fulfilled it all and he is the one who was raised up by God because he had done that because he had loved righteousness he's the psalmist and he had hated wickedness he had lived the life of devotion to God and because of his devotion to God not only did he finish that work and not only did he fulfill everything for himself but he did it for us help me when you come to save them and that salvation certainly includes their participation in everything that he has achieved and secured they are justified by faith they are indwelt by his spirit they are sanctified by his power they are fulfilling all righteousness by the power of his spirit in them and so the psalmist in a new testament where we can think of him reaching out for the help that comes when God saves his people through the power of his holy spirit as it descends upon them and brings to them everything that Christ has secured that clothes them with righteousness that gives them a new heart to serve God that gives them a new heart to live in devotion to

God and that gives them a heart that recognizes and that enjoys that spirit of adoption that they are the children of God indeed the assurance of belonging to God help me when you come and say them is that not tonight what you are looking for that is remembering of you to change you from what you are to be like what he wants you to be said not that you recognize that it is through the ongoing work of his spirit and of his grace in your life that he will do that that he will change that he will transform and that he will set apart when you come to save them when you come knocking at their door the door of the people of

God to bring your work on in their lives don't pass my door sometimes there are times in life when we we may see somebody going from door to door it might be somebody important it might be somebody we want to avoid and we wonder is that person going to come to my door or is he going to bypass me and here the psalmist is reaching out to God and saying to God that when you come to visit your people when you come to help them don't go past my door don't go past the door of my heart bring to me everything that you have prepared and provided for your people the Spurgeon said bring it all home to me come to my house and to my heart and give me the salvation which you have prepared and are alone able to bestow belonging don't you long tonight to have your whole experience in line with what

God wants you to be and what God has purposed you to be and you know that's impossible apart from the passion of Christ and you know that's impossible apart from the spirit of God and your plea that comes out from the heart in which you are lamenting is reaching out to God to lead you to the cross of Christ to the person of Christ who is the dispenser of the spirit of God so that once more everything will be reignited in your heart and you will be inflamed in your heart to follow to devotion to love him to be what he wants you to be it's not just what you want to be it's to be what he wants you to be and then for you to be part of to feel that you're part of the church of Christ you see everything that he wants for himself is what

[30 : 57] God is going to do for his people and for his inheritance and for the nation for his chosen ones he wants to be part of what God is doing for his people in Christ and tonight that's what I'm looking for in my communion that God will come in here into my heart that he will refresh and revive as he does that along with all of the rest of the people of God so that my communion will be with him and with them the lament the longing and briefly in conclusion the location where do you want to be where did the psalmist want to be what position did he want to be in it was that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation that I may glory with your inheritance that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones in other words it's more than simply looking on as an observer that wouldn't satisfy it was looking on as someone who was experiencing the blessing of God for his people and he wanted to find himself in that location where he could not just look upon but where his heart was filled with the experience of the people of God and where are we going to find that he was looking for it with the people of

God to experience it with them in the church and with the chosen one of God's people and tonight we want to know our true location as the people of God and we want God to do all of these things so that he will bring us to understand that in him in Christ is all our salvation and when tonight I want to see the prosperity of your chosen ones I want to see it from a particular standpoint and the particular standpoint from which I want to see it is to see myself in Christ and to see that vista of all that Christ is as if it were from the inside because all that God has and all that God has prepared he has invested it in Christ and tonight as a child of God my longing is to know myself in

Christ where I can look around me and see all of the glory of God in the passion of Christ and then I will see the prosperity of your chosen ones then I will see the goodness of God then I will see the good things that God has given to his people then I will see that as the elect children of God there are precious things to be experienced there are precious things to be shared and there is a glorious hope to look forward to and as we read down through that verse that we see that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation that I may glory with your inheritance tonight we want to stand in a rightful position in Christ and we want God to do everything that is necessary to bring us to find ourselves standing there in that location where the view is immaculate and where the view is

God glorifying and where the view is such that I will sing glory to God and praise God for all that Christ is as Paul said God forbid that I should glory in anywhere or in anyone but in the cross of Jesus Christ where the world is crucified to me and I to the world to find myself there and then I can go to the Lord's table lamenting over my sin but going with the rejoicing of God's spirit in my heart and going with the people of God with that strength and power and influence of that rejoicing and that joy not so that the lamenting disappears but so that the lamenting is in many ways overshadowed by the glory of

Christ and by the praise that comes to follow so let's go forward as the people of God let's lament that we're not what we would want to be that we're not what God would have us to be let's long for God and reach out to God to remember us so that he will make us what he wants us to be and what we would love to be ourselves and so that in going to the Lord's table we might find once more how precious Christ is and that he is all our salvation and all of our desire and does he not make it grow of course he does it is his plan to bring it on and on and tonight with the people of God we go onwards and upwards because that is God's work and that's the direction which he is bringing his own people may God bless his word to us let us join together in prayer