

A Plan for Lament

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Preacher: John Lau

[0 : 0 0] Morning, church. Let's pray. Lord, you know the deep places through which our life must go.

Help us when we enter them to lift our hearts to you. Help us to be patient when we are afflicted, to be humble when we are in distress, and grant that the hope of your mercy may never fail us, and the consciousness of your loving kindness may never be crowded or hidden from our sight.

Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen. Greetings, and I'm glad that you can join us today, especially if you're joining us online. If this is your first time tuning in to our live stream or gathering with us here, we have been studying over the last few weeks the topic of lament from the book of Lamentation and Psalms in the Old Testament of the Bible.

So have you heard of the term lament? When someone says he or she is lamenting, what exactly are they doing? If today is not your first time with us, and you have journeyed with us and with the writer of Psalms and Lamentation, have you practiced any laments in the last few weeks?

James, the brother of Jesus, wrote us in his letter in the New Testament from chapter 1, verse 22. James 1, verse 22 says, Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourself.

[1 : 4 6] Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it, not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it, they will be blessed in what they do.

James warn us that if we listen to God's word but take no action in practicing what we hear, we are deceiving ourselves. We are deceiving ourselves into thinking that we are right with God when we are not.

If we take no action, our faith is a shame and will have devastating consequences for our life now and our eternal destiny. If we merely listen to God's word but do not do what it says, it's like someone who looks into a mirror.

The mirror that James referred to is not the same that we use now, but the one that make with polished copper or bronze, which does not give a good impression to someone who only take a glance of it.

[3 : 0 4] It will take a considerable amount of time to work out what you look like with them. What we see in a mirror is meant to lead us into action.

For someone who might be a bit more confident with their image, looking in the mirror will lead them to more admiration of themselves. They will stop at every mirror and not just making sure they look okay, but they will admire themselves and say, oh, why do I look so handsome?

Oh, I look so perfect. But for general people, the action is usually corrective, such as a dirty face that needs to be washed.

The only reason that you can walk away and immediately forget what you look like would be because you utterly regret the fault you saw or discovered and instantly forget what you have seen.

It's ludicrous to have checked your face in the mirror or hear God's words and rapidly ignore and forget what you have heard. It's absurd for someone who belongs to God or call themselves a Christian, a follower of Christ, to be so cavalier towards God's word.

[4 : 26] So let's repent together and turn towards God like how the book of Lamentation finished at chapter 5, verse 21 and 22 by praying, restore us to yourself, Lord, that we might return.

Renew our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure. Suppose you are not yet a believer or follower of Christ or follower of the biblical God who created this world and you and me.

Lamenting is part and partial of the Bible, the word of God. It is also part and partial of a Christian life. God encourages us, his follower, to join him in lamenting over the fallen situation of his created world.

To lament is to know God. So let's together, online, in person, believe it or not yet, look at what, why, and how to lament today.

So what is lament? Lament is a declaration of the struggles and sufferings you are experiencing directly to God with honesty and in a God-honoring way.

[5 : 49] I've been reading a book by Gordon Wynham named The Soldiers Reclaimed, Praying and Praising with the Psalms. He commented that lament is a prayer to God for delivery from Christ regarding enemies, defeats in battle, and a life-threatening illness.

These prayers of lament are written and collected in the Psalms and lamentation of the Bible. In this crisis situation, the person lamenting often seems to think that God has deserted them.

almost half of the 150 Psalms are lament Psalms. Usually, the most common format is complaint, with a cry for help and description of distress.

Petition, with an appeal to God and reason for divine intervention. And praise, that ends on a note of certainty that prayer has been heard and a vow to praise God for deliveries.

So the usual pattern for lament is complain, petition, and praise. Like the Psalm we just read out by Vivian, Psalm 13, it goes like this, How long, Lord, will you forget me forever?

[7 : 20] How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death. And my enemy will say, I have overcome him. And my foes rejoice when I fall.

The Psalmist was in real trouble. His enemy were attacking him and he doubt whether God still cared for him. He worried that his enemy will realize how shaky his faith is and will go over the loss of faith.

But like most men, Psalm 13 suddenly changed key, ending on a note of confidence and praise in verse 5. But I trust in your unfailing love.

My heart rejoiced in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise for he has been good to me. Though the man usually ends on a note of hope, several do not.

[8 : 33] Though at some point they may express hope, the Psalmist sometimes referred to a despair at the end. His glamour of hope seems extinguished.

and it is at this point, at those dark points, that God's steadfast love will shine through to prove his faithfulness to us.

So some of you might question whether it's appropriate for Christians to lament and some of us did ask that. Can Christians use such sound?

Shall we not be giving thanks in all circumstances? Are such songs appropriate to people of faith, particularly for use in public worship? So why do we lament?

Lament lines up our thoughts about our situation with God's plans for us and this world. Lament turns and tunes our heart to the hurt and anger of God towards our mentality towards him and his word.

[9 : 47] Lament drives us to action which often involves confession and repentance. So lament brings our heart, our heart, our head and our hands together to glorify God.

Christians should be lamenting together or quote psalms that is written for lament because lament are most quoted in the New Testament.

Psalms 22 and 69 are the two most quoted psalms by all the writers of the New Testament. Psalm 69 was quoted in the book of John, in the book of Acts and Romans.

Christians, a follower of Christ should lament because of Christ we follow Jesus, pray Psalm 22 on the cross and Psalm 31 just before he died.

On the night before he rests, he would have been singing a few lament psalms with his disciples. So, we should lament or use the psalms of lament because our Christ was the one that using it.

[11 : 08] Christians in today's society get nervous when we come across a sentence like, how long Lord will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

Because this kind of sentence counters our culture of positivity. Our religious culture identifies strong faith with ambitions, ambitious, joyful, and strong.

Our society emphasizes and pursue comfortable self-made life and prides itself on being better than the rest of the world. Many Christians are influenced by our society and have difficulty emphasizing with the reality of suffering and the seemingly absence of God.

We think it's not appropriate to lament to or about God is too negative to make God look bad.

another reason we must lament in today's society by using or praying these psalms is those who think they have no problem and difficulties in their life can learn to sympathize with those in trouble and pray for those suffering or persecuted.

[12 : 38] Our reality is no one is immune to suffering and challenges in life. And maybe the reality for you right now is you are under significant burden.

Both physical and spiritual sickness, marital problems, financial difficulties, pressure at work, even harassment and persecution.

The advancing of your age bring all sorts of problems with you. you find it very hard to come full of joy or happiness. When you can see no way out and in your distress, lamenting and crying out, how long Lord, is a sure and only way of getting to our saying the Lord's praise for his has been good to me.

So what is the most significant experience of suffering that you have gone through that you are going through now? What injustice and social issues disturb you most?

God is inviting you to put your trust in him and lament with him over your significant sufferings and to cry out to him. Bring your lamentation to God, especially if you are now in the middle of your hardship.

[14 : 05] Let's practice lamentation, lamenting together, together, bring your suffering to God. We'll practice lamenting together today by reading out aloud Psalm 13, 42, and 43 to each other.

We'll divide this church into four groups, including you online. So group one, session one will be over there in front of the Stings window.

Session two will be to my left here. Session three is this group, including you online, and session four is those under the mezzanine.

So what we're going to do is we're going to read out loud on the screen as the scripture comes up. So session one, we'll start reading out Lamentation 5, 21 to 22, and then Psalm 13.

And while the session is reading, the rest of us can listen. And then the next session, we'll read the next session of text, and the rest can listen as well. So as we read out these verses, let's bring to your mind the suffering that you might be going through, and also the suffering of this world.

[15 : 22] And let's bring this word to God, and let God's word lead you through a journey of lament. Amen. So session one, please join me to read out.

Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we might return, renew our days as of old, unless you have utterly reject us and are angry with us beyond measure.

How long, Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? how long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, Lord, my God, give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death.

And my enemy will say, I have overcome him, and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love. my heart rejoice in your salvation.

[16 : 34] And I will sing praise, sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me. Session two. Ready?

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God, when can I go and meet with God?

My teeth have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, where is your God? These things I remember as I pour out my soul, how I used to go to the house of God.

Under the protection of mighty one, we shout of joy and praise among the fisted throne. Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my savior and my God. Session three, and those of you online, please join me.

[17 : 44] My soul is downcast within me, therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the height of Hermon, from Mount Missa.

Deep course to deep in the roar of your waterfalls, all your waves and breakers have swept over me. I day the Lord dearest his love, and light the song is with me.

I pray to the God of my life. I say to my God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?

My bones suffer mortal agony, as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, where is your God? Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in the God, for I will yet praise him, my savior and my God. And section four over there.

[18 : 54] Vindicate me, my God, and plead the rescue me from those who are deceitful and wicked.

You are God, my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? Send me your light and your faithful care.

Let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my joy and my delight.

I will praise you with the lead. O God, my God, why my soul are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my savior and my God.

And let's read together this next session. Together, we store us to yourself, Lord, that we might return. Renew our days as of old.

[20 : 02] Unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure. How long, Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

how long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death. And my enemy will say I have overcome him and my foes rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love. my heart rejoice in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise for he has been good to me.

Many haunting questions will surface and often surface in the middle of a difficult circumstance. While we're reading through those section of Psalms, what comes up to your mind?

[21 : 10] while we wait for God to deliver us, we cannot help but question sometimes, have we missed the way by mistake?

Have we done something wrong? So we are facing what we're facing now. Does God care? Is God there after all or have we been mistaken all along?

Waiting does something to us. I don't know, have you ever been to an emergency ward when you are so urgently needed some help?

So you got in there, you waited, you got a number, and every time a nurse will pass, you're like, is that me? Or someone that I want to help? But the longer you sit in there, the reaction of your heart is slow.

The longest the people that sit in the emergency ward often is the waiting part actually changed them. Waiting does something to us, and it also tells us something.

[22 : 21] It shows what our relationship is to the person and to the event that we are waiting for. The way a man will wait for his fiancée and the wedding, the way they're expecting parents wait for their babies during their pregnancy.

The excitement of the waiting because the person that they're waiting for, the event they're waiting for, is worth waiting for. Waiting shows us what we think of the person who keeps us waiting, and we have to wait no more, because the Lord has come.

Our Savior, our God, has dismounted us. Jesus is not a means to an end or mechanism through which we can change our circumstance.

He is the end. Our circumstance means to drive us to him. It's not that our suffering doesn't matter. It matters enough to bring tears to the eyes of the Son of God, Jesus.

when he saw someone die, when he saw Jerusalem, and people are not worshipping God as the way they should.

[23 : 45] Our suffering, our circumstance means to drive us to Jesus, to God. Our suffering matters to our God. it matters like a first meeting, matters to a marriage, or like a birth, matters to motherhood.

It's the entry point to a relationship formed through suffering as much as through joy. As if Jesus claimed the goal of our existence is a relationship with him, finding him in our suffering is a main point of lamenting.

Let's pray. Lord, you know the deep places through which our life must go.

Help us when we enter them. To leave our hearts to you, help us to be patient when we are affected, to be humble when we are in distress, and grant that the hope of your mercy may never fail us, and the consciousness of your loving kindness may never be crowded or hidden from our eyes.

Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
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[25 : 20] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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