

The Value of Brokenness

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[0 : 00] Lamentations teaches us about lamenting. The statement that we've been saying often is the cry is human, but to lament is Christian. Lamenting is how we as Christians express our sorrow and our heartache to our God.

I'm thankful that we have small kids in here on Sunday night, but lamentations is a heavy subject. It's definitely not an inappropriate subject, and it's definitely something that they need to be prepared for.

But so many times with Christians, we've talked about how our upbringing prepared us for many things that we faced. I know some of you think that school makes you do things that you're never going to do in life, right?

You wish they would teach you how to do your taxes and not trigonometry. Or they teach you how to use certain things, and you say, I'm never going to use this in real life. Well, the church and growing up, maybe you feel like we've answered questions.

As a church, people like myself have answered questions that you were never asking, you're not asking, and that nobody is asking. But lamenting is something that every one of you need to be prepared for.

[1 : 05] There's going to come a time in your life when you look at something and you're going to say, this is heartbreaking and awful, but I know that God is good. When things happen that are bad, sometimes you look at it and you say, well, I can see how something good is going to come out of this.

You know, I can already begin to see it. I think about the home that Stephanie and I lived in. There's a couple of homes that we tried to buy that we couldn't, and I drive by that house and I think, man, I'm glad I'm not there.

I'm glad that I'm here, and I'm glad that that didn't come together. And so I immediately see that. But there's other things in life that I say, on this side of heaven, I'm just going to trust that God is good, and I don't fully see it.

I would expect that most of you in here would be aware of the fact or heard. In our last missions conference, we were going to have the Goins family, missionaries of Honduras, with us, but we weren't able to make that work.

We had some change in their scheduling. But this last week, their son, Jaden, who was a freshman there in college, he was working in landscaping.

[2 : 07] A drunk driver went off the road and went into the yard, and he passed away. And it's just heartbreaking. It's heavy. I'm thankful for the student body, that they were in a Christian environment where people could help them.

But things like that happen in our lives. And what I appreciate about the book of Limitations, and I better get to it and be quick about it, is that it doesn't, the seven things that Limitations doesn't do for us, it does not resolve the pain of God's actions quickly or neatly.

It doesn't just pat you on the back and say, well, time will heal everything, it's going to be okay. It does not answer all of our questions. It does not communicate things in a way that is tidy or even comfortable.

And it does not downplay the significance of the struggle or the pain. It doesn't say, rub a little dirt into it and just shake it off and keep going. But it recognizes that in life there's times where our hearts are going to be broken.

Grief is not perfectly linear. It doesn't just work in a straight line where you can't say, okay, now what do I do? What's next on this list? You know, I don't know who once said it, but I probably had a marriage retreat one time hearing about the difference of men and women, about how men, we kind of think linear.

[3 : 26] Like if I'm working on a project, I will go to Home Depot five or six times because I didn't get the thing that I needed for the next project. I just got what I needed, right? But Stephanie, she'll go into town and she'll also stop by Aldi to get the meat we need for supper.

And then she'll stop at Target because that's where she vacations. She shops at Walmart, vacations at Target, right? And she'll walk in a circle there for a little bit. And she'll do like five or six things all connected, but not me.

I just like straight line. I need, oh, I need a nail. I'll go get one. Come back. It looks like I'm going to need another one. All right? Go back and get a whole box of them. And it's easier like that.

But grief isn't. Grief isn't like that. Lamenting, lament mourns what has happened. It anchors us in what we believe. And it looks expectantly to the day when God will make all things right, but it does not demand a timeline.

So would you look at me in chapter number one because it's been so long. And this would be one of the books. I know that John recently had encouraged some people. I believe in his life group that they read through an entire book of the Bible when you sit down.

[4 : 31] Limitations is a book that you most certainly should read all the way through. You should take the time to do that. I don't think any of y'all want me to preach it in one go, so we'll divide it up in the chapters. But you need to see all of it.

Chapter number one is a poetic, a graphic description of the fall of the city of Jerusalem. So chapter number one, if you're looking, young people, look, how many verses does it have?

How many verses chapter number one have? Say it out loud. 22, all right? And so we talked about how it's an acrostic, like the ABCs of Hebrew, and how it's laid out. And when we looked at that, we saw the devastating consequences of sin, and we were encouraged in confessing our sins and to know that God would love us too much to allow us to continue on a path of sin.

So chapter one, so I'm going to read a few verses in verse number one for you. How does the city sit in solitary that was full of people? How was she become a widow? She that was great among the nations and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary?

She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers, she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her. They are become her enemies.

[5 : 43] And so we see the city here as a sad picture here of a widow that has lost everything and is devastated, dealing with the consequences of the decisions they have made.

Chapter number two, we see the bigness of God's righteousness and how we can feel like an adversary when he turns against sin, that God is slow in his anger and his wrath towards sin, but it does come, and he had been patient with them, and it was a very heavy chapter.

It was Lamentations chapter number two where I decided, why did I choose Lamentations to go to next? It was so heavy. Let me read a little bit from that chapter for you. And it says, This is verse 17.

Then we got to chapter number three, The Summit of Lamentations, the part that we all want to go to, the part if somebody, if you're at a church and they're not preaching through the book of Lamentations, and they say, Please turn in your Bible to Lamentations, you assume that they're going to go to this portion in Lamentations.

And it's there we see the hope and mercies every morning and the confidence in God's faithfulness. And around verse number 20, we saw a change in what was being said. Verse number 21 says this, This I recall to my mind, Therefore have I hope.

[7 : 29] It is of the Lord's mercies that were not consumed. Because of His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.

Therefore will I hope in Him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man shall both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Therefore I have hope. So what I encouraged you was that hope springs when truth about God has been rehearsed. Jeremiah is lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem, But while he is doing that, He's clinging to what he knows to be true about God.

As I think about Peter in our, this morning as we're looking at Luke chapter number 22, Peter had denied Christ, and then it says that the gaze of Christ was upon him and he looked at him.

And Peter, he weeps bitterly, because he knows he had sinned against a perfect and gracious Jesus. But what did he also remember? The promise that Jesus had said, After you've been converted, go and strengthen the brother.

[8 : 37] So both of those are existent together. That God is good, He is gracious, but that bitterness of breaking his heart, the bitterness of weeping.

And so here's four ways in which I encourage you, four truths for us to rehearse out of the passage. We learned that, we were reminded that God's mercy never ends. His mercy never ends.

That God does not waste our waiting. Even though they were dealing with rebuilding and all they had to do, God did not waste it. He drew His people back to Him. We were reminded that the story is not over.

And that God is always good. And those are four truths. That God's mercy never ends. That God does not waste our waiting. The story is not over. And God is always good. Those are four truths that can provide hope for you during a dark days of your life.

So we get to chapter 4 and 5. So chapter number 22 has, chapter 2 has 22 verses. Another acrostic. Chapter 3, if you'll remember that, it has 66 verses.

[9 : 38] And so what does that look like? It looks like A, A, A, B, B, B. Chapter 4 has 22 verses. It's an acrostic. Chapter 5 has 22 verses. So it's an acrostic.

Nope, it isn't. All right? You'll get that one on the quiz if you were just guessing. All right? And so the last chapter is not. But chapter 4, the one that we're looking at tonight, is an acrostic. And it gives glimmers of hope, more so than chapters 1 and 2, but it's still very dark.

The promise of what God is and the pain of life exists together. They're not necessarily reconciled. So here in chapter 4, particularly God shows us that mercy that comes after brokenness.

The hope of the chapter 3 is still true, but Jeremiah reflects on how broken the people really are, as if God is deconstructing His people such that their only hope is in Him.

He has broken them so that He can rebuild them. He has taken away the things that have used His crutches so that they will look to Him. And we see that the Bible commends this type of brokenness.

[10 : 40] This type of brokenness will create a path towards God and His mercy. Let me define brokenness, since I've said it so many times and I'm going to say it so many more times.

Brokenness is this. It's when God removes the objects of our trust so that we're driven to hope in Him, where we say all we have is God, only God.

Sometimes brokenness can come because of our sin. Sometimes it can come because of the sin of someone else's sin. It can also come because of the general brokenness in the world in which we live.

A great book called The Tale of Three Kings kind of gives a picture of David and the brokenness that he experiences at the hand of King Saul. And I want to share with you what it says. It says, David was caught in a very uncomfortable position.

However, he seemed to grasp a deep understanding of the unfolding drama in which he had been caught. He seemed to understand something that few or even the wisest men of his day understood.

[11 : 41] He seemed to understand something that few or even the wisest men of his day understood. Something that in our day, when wise men are wiser still, even few understand. And what is that?

God did not have, but wanted very much to have, men and women who would live in pain. God wanted a broken vessel. God used the things in David's life.

The sin, anything that came against him from Saul, God did not ordain Saul to be sinful. God did not orchestrate to do that. But he would teach David how to respond in a broken world.

He would make decisions. Like the king of Egypt would have, his heart would be turned over to his evilness and those things that were given there. And so Saul would make decisions that would affect David's life. And he lived in that brokenness.

But God would walk him through that. And that God would use that in forming him. In Psalm 51, 16 and 17, it says, For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it.

[12 : 38] Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. O God, that will not despise. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.

Psalm 34, 18 says, The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such to be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

And then in the New Testament, Jesus calls upon us in Matthew 11, All that labor and heavy laden, he will give us rest. We could take our yoke upon him and learn of him.

And for he is meek and lowly of heart, we should find rest in him. 1 Peter tells us 5, 6, Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt thee in due time, casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

And so brokenness awakens us to our need for God's mercy. One more quote from that book, but it says, What does this world need? Gifted men and women, outwardly empowered, or individuals who are broken and inwardly transformed?

[13 : 49] Can you think of a time in your life when God removed all your crutches from you? He removed all the things that you said were plan B, all the things that you thought you could find hope and comfort in, and all you were left with was looking to him, and saying, God, if I don't find hope and comfort in you, it will not be found.

That's at a place of brokenness. Where God, it says that he's near to those that are of a broken and a contrite heart. A broken people.

So after identifying the faithfulness of God in chapter 3, Jeremiah quickly returns to the destruction. And the theme can be found in verse number 1, where it says, How has the gold become dim?

It's that word, how. And so there's no longer any hope in their culture, or in their leaders, or in their nation who might come and rescue them. Verses 1 through 11, How has the gold become dim?

How has the most fine gold changed? The stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. In that passage here, we see Israel that was so proud of their status as God's chosen people.

[14 : 54] Now everything in their culture had been destroyed. There had been something special about the nation, the temple, and their place in the world, but now the glory of Israel had completely faded. I told you before, people would go by and they would make mock of them.

The nations would mock at the situation they've been in. The glory years were now all in the past. If you captured a picture of the nation there in the reign of David, or Solomon, or Hezekiah, remember when Solomon's king, people were coming from other nations to see how incredible it was, or Josiah, and compared it to the scene, it would just be utterly shocking.

Just completely different. My first mission trip was to the Republic of Georgia, and you could tell when I went into that city that it was a place that was destroyed, but looking around, I could say, this must have been something at some point in history.

That's where they're at now. The question, how has the gold become dim? Two things that were being said there. Probably not either, or, but probably both are happening here.

The beauty of the temple was the gold. It could have been a general statement about the gold upon the temple, or it could have been a reference to their position that they would have had. In verse number two, it said, the precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold.

[16 : 09] The people once considered themselves to be gold and precious, and the other nations to be of lesser value. They were the gold standard when it came to nations, and now they have been broken down, and they're not where they used to be.

The people of Israel treated each other very cruelly. Verses three and four speaks of that. The young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. It says like an ostrich in the wilderness.

We learn from the book of Job that ostriches don't look after their eggs, and so it's as eggs of an ostrich not being cared for. Children are dying of thirst and begging for food.

The princes have lost their status and their lifestyle. No one recognizes them. They're ravaged and hungry for thirst. Verse eight, they would have been better if they'd have been killed in battle, they believe, in verse nine, they'd have to endure the suffering, and it's just a horrible picture, and all of this is happening.

God is disciplining his children. Verse 11, the Lord has accomplished his fury, he has poured out his fierce anger, and has kindled a fire in Zion, has devoured the foundations thereof.

[17 : 14] The glory days are not just gone, but they're dead and they're buried, and Israel as a people and a nation have lost. In verses 12 through 16, it discredits their leadership.

The kings of the earth, verse 12, and all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered in the gates of Jerusalem. For the sin of our prophets, the iniquities of our priests, they have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her.

And so when people are in a crisis, they should be able to look to leadership to help deliver them, to give them hope, to lead them to better days, but their leadership had been discredited. There's no confidence to them.

He reminds the readers the very important reason for the destruction we saw in verse 11 and in verse 13. For the sins of our prophets and the iniquities of our priests, they have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her.

That the country had been corrupt from all across, even in the leadership. And the false prophets have not listened to Jeremiah and they gave people of Israel false confidence and they were not and they were now in grave danger.

[18 : 15] The people were not taught the law but they were rebuked. They were not rebuked and they fell in the sin. Spiritual leaders did not warn the people and so the people were repulsed by their leaders that they kicked them out of their city.

That's verse number 15. They cried unto them speaking to their leaders, Depart ye, it is unclean. Depart, depart, touch not. When they fled away and wondered and they said among the heathen they shall not more sojourn there.

You can remember that and we think about the New Testament somebody that had leprosy they would say depart from here you can't be among us. That's what it said that they did to their leaders. So their culture there's no hope in it.

There's no status symbol being part of them. There's no confidence in their leadership and then we continue on here and who is behind this. Verse 16 we're reminded once again the anger of the Lord has divided them.

He will no more regard them. They respected not the persons or the priests. They favored not the elders. And just the contrast of that prayer of benediction in Numbers where it says the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and the Lord lift up his countenance.

[19 : 21] Here we have they respected not the persons or the priests. They favored not the elders. that the people the spiritual leaders were not a blessing to them. And God's face of judgment has changed what the people saw in the face of their leaders and priests.

So now the culture has been lost the leaders are discredited and there's nothing left inside of Israel to hope in. Perhaps there was another nation that would help them and then they find disappointment.

They look for help and nobody would come and help them. It tells us in Jeremiah that one country came near them but they went away kind of like you might have read in a book or in a story where a person is drowning out at sea and a plane flies over like oh they're going to help me but it doesn't happen.

That's what we have in Jeremiah 37 the Egyptian army marched close enough to draw Babylonians but they don't help and they're once again reminded that it's not going to happen. So everything they tried has failed.

Verse 18 They hunt our steps and we cannot go in our streets our end is near our days were fulfilled for our end has come our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven they pursued us upon the mountains they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

[20 : 28] And so their king was captured King Zedekiah they come and get him kind of the puppet king the one the anointed the Lord was taken in their pits and no one was willing to help them.

Verse 21 it says Rejoice and be glad O daughter of Edom thou dwellest in the land of Uz the cup also shall pass through these just the enemies are rejoicing in the position that they're in and so you see a broken people of God are in chapter 4 and God has removed every single crutch they could rely upon and he has left them only with one hope and I'm glad that I get to share verse number 22 with you before we leave the night what a horrible place to be.

Many years ago I was at a funeral for a teenager down in Atlanta there was hundreds of unbelieving teenagers or people that had paired that they hadn't been to many funerals before and a man was preaching and he talked about the Ten Commandments and he talked about the reason these things happened it was a murder between one teenager and another and he ended the funeral with saying we must get the Ten Commandments back in our school and I just remember thinking what a horrible place to stop right what a horrible place to stop to draw a picture to remind everybody that they were sinners but not to tell them about Jesus Lamentations would just be awful it would just be absolutely awful but verse 22 it's not many words but it's enough the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished O daughter of Zion he will no more carry thee away into captivity he will visit that iniquity O daughter of Eden he will discover thy sins the nation is at the mercy of God and this is not a bad place to be even when life is hard disappointing or painful

God will bring his people back to the promised land so I don't know where God would find you today and perhaps you can relate to the picture that we have seen here of the people of God that are utterly broken here's just a list to think through you could have thoughts like these I wasn't supposed to still be single at this point my marriage was not supposed to end this way or be like this my marriage and family were supposed to be more fulfilling I was supposed to have a real career or have it figured out what I wanted to do my kids were supposed to turn out differently I raised them the right way I thought by this point I'd not still be dealing with the same sins or struggles or issues my ministry was supposed to help more people I feel like I missed God's will for my life this is not where I thought I would be at in this stage of life all those places bring us to brokenness just like in Job's suffering led him to see God differently Job 42 5 and 6 I've heard of thee by the hearing of the ear but now mine eye seeth thee wherefore I bore myself repent in dust and ashes and so we can thank God for the place that he brings us in life where we see when he is all that we have that he is all that we need so brokenness leads us to seeing it should not it should not be wasted a pain that leads you to trust in God alone is not pointless the key however is whether or not we can embrace the brokenness that God brings because it brings us something better which is

God himself God broke Israel because her trust was not in him he would not allow her to continue in the path to rebellion against him he loved her too much to allow her to go her own way this kind of perspective on brokenness can change everything it actually makes you thankful that God has leveled you because of what he has brought you to and brokenness leads you to mercy because brokenness leads you to God and for the believer that is the greatest of treasures I would encourage you to look at your life and as I read that and to think about the times in your life in brokenness and maybe you're looking back on them and they're pretty far in the rear view mirror of your life right now and you should just thank God for them say God I thank you I thank you if it was a result of your own sin which we've all dealt with before where we've dealt with the consequences of our own sin and pain or maybe you were dealing with the consequences of somebody else's sin and the sin and the decisions they were made would you look back on it and say

[24 : 45] God I want to thank you for the times in your life that I couldn't look right I couldn't look left but all I could do is look up to you for hope and has caused you to treasure him more and to recognize how wonderful he is and before I pray I'll end with the song I want to talk to the youngest ones that are in here and I want you to know this that the word of God has something to say about everything that you'll ever experience in your life when people tell you and you'd say well I'm in a place in life and my heart is just really broken something really bad has happened but nobody ever seemed to talk about that in Sunday school everybody only seemed to talk about good days as a Christian or people always told me that if I did right then everything would turn out and nobody ever told me that things could happen in my life even though they're not the result of my decisions or that these things could come and I could live in that brokenness and I want you to know that that's not the story of the Bible the story of the Bible is so much more grand than that it's so much more it's better than that that God is not going to leave you and he's not going to forsake you sometimes in our friendships somebody can get caught up in something and we just say it's just easier for us to walk away from them but the God of heaven will never do that for you and so if you find yourself at a place of brokenness where you say I can't rely upon anybody or any of the crutches that

I've had in life whether it's by results of your own sin or the result of somebody else's sin you could thank God that he is near to those that have a broken heart and don't waste those moments in your life use those to draw closer to him and then after you've done that what should you do we're going to borrow from this morning right after you have got to a place and you have strengthened yourself in the Lord then you should go what you know and strengthen your brothers and sisters as well let's take a moment as before we stand and sing let's take a moment and individually pray before we begin to pray I'm going to thank God there's some moments in my life that in the middle of them I just thought it was the most awful thing and that I would never live and now as I look back on it I realize the things that I learned about God were just so precious and so wonderful and I'm thankful that I didn't make it to this time in my life without having gone through for them maybe some of you are dealing with some bitterness or some resentment towards those things in your life and maybe if you had allowed the book of Lamentation and God's word to help you look at them differently God has never been anything but good but we live in a broken world and because we live in a broken world bad things will happen towards us things that will hurt but he is near to us during that time and he doesn't waste them he uses us he uses those times to draw us closer to him heavenly father lord I thank you for the word of God the whole counsel of the word father I thank you for stories that are just wonderful that we can rejoice in but also thank you for showing us just the darkest hour for the nation of Israel that we see a people that as a result of their own sin are just going through the most horrific type of destruction they're having something lord that we cannot even begin to fathom when everything around them has fallen apart father even though it's the result of their sins and they're living in it you never walked away from them you remain true to your promise you were close to them and father we take comfort in that that knowing that in our darkest hour and our time of brokenness where we can't look in any direction for hope and comfort we can look up to you and know that you are near in Jesus name I pray amen thanks to him thanks to my