



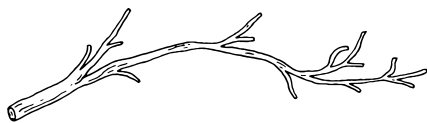
WEEK 12

LAMENTATIONS

FALL READING GUIDE

LAMENTATIONS

GOD MEETS US IN OUR SUFFERING



WEEK 12

NOVEMBER 21, 2022



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

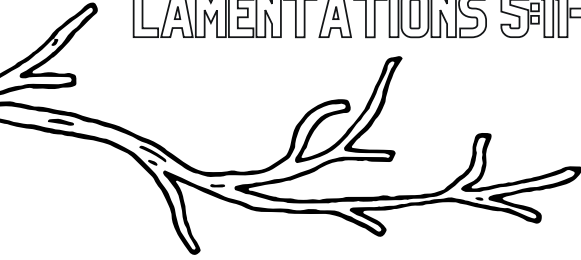
... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.

WEEK 12

LAMENTATIONS 5:11-22



DAY 1

JESUS IS OUR PEACE

P.5

DAY 2

JESUS IS OUR REST

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DAY 3

JESUS IS OUR JOY

P.9

DAY 4

JESUS IS OUR LIGHT

P.11

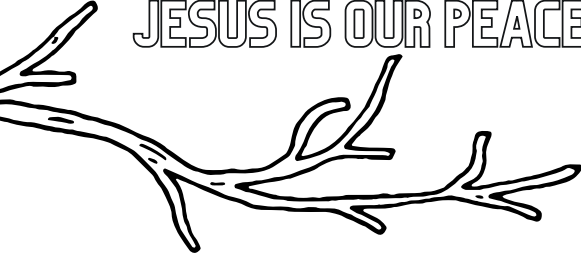
DAY 5

JESUS IS OUR RESOLUTION

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DAY 1

JESUS IS OUR PEACE

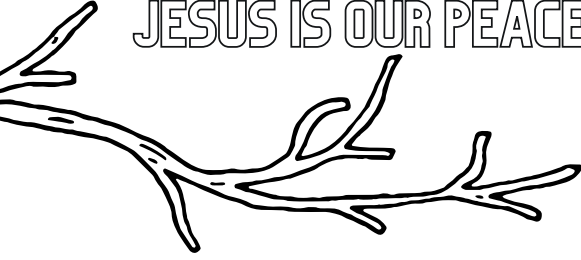


First read **Lamentations 5:11-12.**

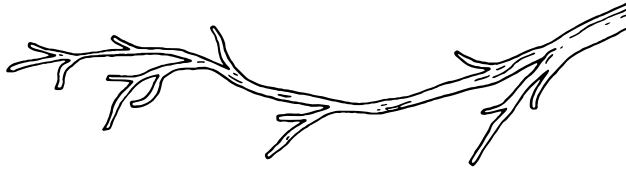
The depravity of God’s people is overwhelming. Women are abused. Royalty is humiliated. Elders are dehumanized. Israel is begging, **“Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace!”** (v.1). The people recall all the ways they’ve suffered and the severity of their shame; it runs through their bodies and through their whole society. God has not forgotten. But his inaction, or at least his apparent refusal to end Israel’s punishment, feels like he’s forgotten them. They’ve been overtaken. Outside powers have occupied their city in every conceivable way. Leslie Allen explains, “This grim experience of occupation had plunged the whole community into deep, unnatural gloom” (*A Liturgy of Grief*, 156). Our whole self is meant to be occupied with God’s glory. Israel knew this. Daily they recited what’s called the Shema, **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”** (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). When we don’t give our whole self to God in worship, we give ourselves to someone or something else completely. We are not merely parts. We are whole. And sin has occupied us--heart, soul, and body. This is what Jesus came to restore--our fractured and dismembered lives. Before Paul instructed the Roman Christians, **“to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,”** Jesus offered his whole self up for the Father’s glory and our redemption (Romans 12:1). In doing so he restored wholeness, or what’s called Shalom.

DAY 1

JESUS IS OUR PEACE



1. Why is God worthy of your whole self (heart, soul, and body)?
2. Where do you lack wholeness, peace, or shalom in your life?
3. How does the death of Christ restore your whole self and enable you to worship God holistically?



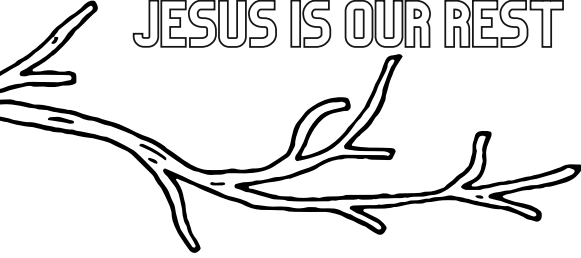
Heavenly Father ...

Sin tore me apart. My body, soul, and heart were occupied by guilt, shame, and death. Lament is teaching me to acknowledge this painful truth, but also to long for your holistic healing. Only you put me back together again and call me whole. Help me offer my whole self in thankful worship to you today.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2

JESUS IS OUR REST

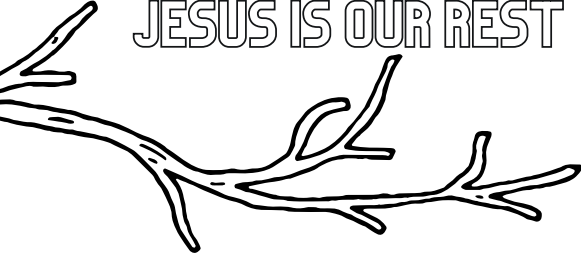


First read **Lamentations 5:13-14.**

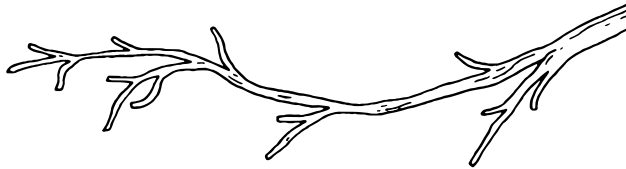
Crushing labor has increased. Wisdom and joy have decreased. Jeremiah tells us that otherwise capable young men have been **“compelled”** to back-breaking work and **“stagger”** underneath the weight of oppressive loads (v.13). They’re slaves. The men who used to dialogue, debate, and make decisions at the city gates are gone (v.14a). The young men who used to sing praise and celebration are silent (v.14b). Sin crushes us and steals from us. It entices us with promises of healing and giving but never keeps its promises. James warned his readers, **“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death”** (James 1:14-15). Israel was wooed by promises of power and provision. They thought they would find flourishing away from God. But sin never keeps promises. Sin never heals and gives, it always crushes us and takes from us. Sin compels us to meaningless tasks of fleeting pleasures. Eventually we stagger underneath the weight of a lack of contentment, wisdom, joy, and peace. We become slaves. By grace, Jesus liberates us and invites us to, **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28). Jesus keeps his promises because he is our rest. By his wounds we are healed and by love our burdens are lifted.

DAY 2

JESUS IS OUR REST



1. How does God give us rest?
2. How sin is crushing you? What is sin stealing from you right now?
3. How might Jesus forgive, heal, relieve, and give you rest from that sin?



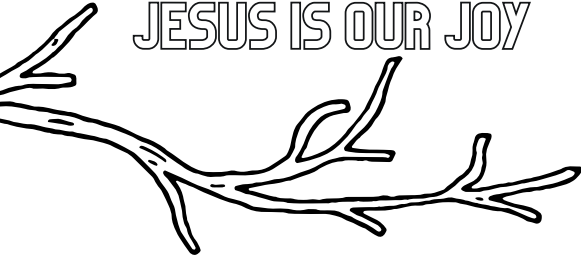
Heavenly Father ...

Forgive me. I go to my sin all the time. I think it will provide something for me only you can. I'm prone to trust _____ and _____ and not you. Thank you for your forgiveness. Thank you that because of your Son, I can be healed, restored, and rest.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3

JESUS IS OUR JOY

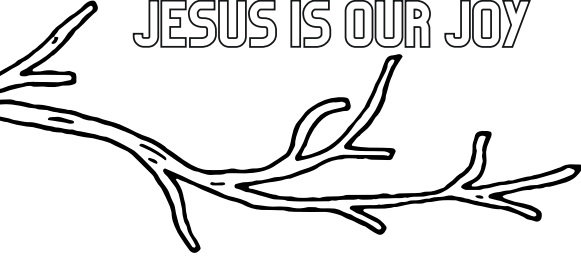


First read **Lamentations 5:15-16.**

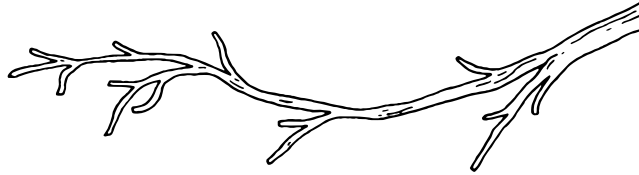
Israel continued to recount all that sin and suffering has cost them. The cost lays deep within their souls. **“They joy of our hearts has ceased ... The crown has fallen from our heads”** (vv.15,16). Sin tells us that happiness and glory can be achieved on our own terms. Following worldly pleasures and ambition promise to make us joyful and successful. Specifically we’re told happiness comes through obeying ourselves and success is achieved from fulfilling personal dreams and desires. God becomes an obstacle. We don’t trust that his righteousness and wisdom will fulfill us or bring us joy. Preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones confronts this presumption in his book *Spiritual Depression*. He says, “Whenever you put happiness before righteousness, you will be doomed to misery. That is the great message of the Bible from beginning to end. They alone are truly happy who are seeking to be righteous.” Israel is lamenting the fact that they’ve discovered this truth the hard way. What they thought would bring pleasure has stolen their joy. What they thought would bring honor has stolen their crowns. Jesus said, **“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love ... my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full”** (John 15:10,11). Joy comes through obeying Jesus because Jesus is our joy (see John 3:29; 16:24; 17:13).

DAY 3

JESUS IS OUR JOY



1. What does it mean that God is joyful? Do you trust that he desires you to be joyful? ;
2. How have you gone to sin for joy recently? What impact did that have on you and others?
3. How has the Lord given you real joy through righteousness and obedience?



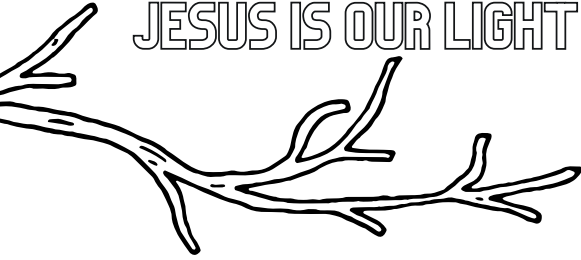
Heavenly Father ...

You are my joy. Daily I'm tempted to trust quick fixes and fleeting pleasures to give me lasting joy. But they can't. Help me to see joy today through the lens of the gospel. Help me to know and obey your Word so I can live with contentment and gladness.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4

JESUS IS OUR LIGHT

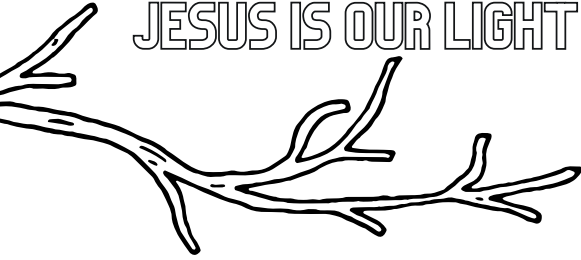


First read **Lamentations 5:17-18.**

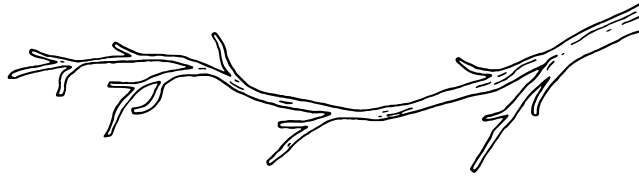
Israel's eyes are failing from lack of nourishment. Their faith is darkening from lack of truth. They lament, **“our heart has become sick, for these things our eyes have grown dim”** (v.17). *How does what we see (or not see) afflict our hearts? Well, what does Israel see?* Mount Zion, the city of God, or Jerusalem sat on a hill that is now, **“desolate”** and **“jackals prowl over it”** (v.18). The desolation they see takes us back to the beginning of Lamentations, **“How lonely sits the city that was full of people!”** (Lamentations 1:1). The city that was once a picture of God's grace and goodness to his people, is now testament to his wrath and holiness. Sin blinds us. It's clear, **“the god of this world”** can blind people from seeing the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4). When we are blinded by sin we look to earthly pleasure and power to fill and satisfy us in ways only God can. That's what Israel did. That's what we do. We expect our spouses to be perfect. We demand our children make us look good. We look to our work to give us eternal meaning and significance. We ask food and sex and drink to make us happy. Spiritual blindness makes our heart sick because it manipulates God's grace and goodness, into gods of our own design. Jesus said, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”** (John 8:12). Jesus reveals truth. He is the light who heals our blindness and exposes lies. In 1962 author C.S. Lewis famously wrote his paper, *Is Theology Poetry?* In it he explained to the The Oxford Socratic Club that, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else.”

DAY 4

JESUS IS OUR LIGHT



1. How does God expose lies and reveal truth?
2. What lies have you been believing? About God? Yourself? Others?
3. How does the cross of Christ expose sin and heal us from sin at the same time?



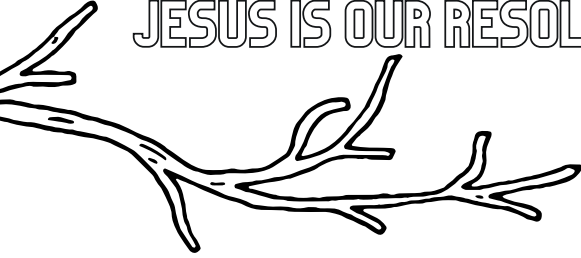
Heavenly Father ...

*Like Israel, without your truth and light our eyes and vision fail.
We confuse you truth and beauty with earthly knockoffs.
Thank you for Jesus, our light, who reveals all that is true and
beautiful. Help me to look to him today.*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5

JESUS IS OUR RESOLUTION

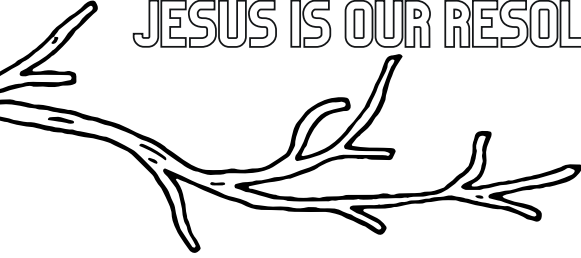


First read **Lamentations 5:19-22**.

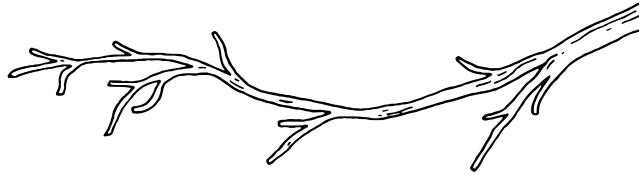
Pastor Timothy Keller says, Christianity doesn't offer us an airtight argument but rather an airtight person. In other words, if we search for irrefutable evidence for God's existence and authenticity of the gospel, we won't find it. That's not how faith works. Instead what we are given is Jesus, an irrefutable Lord. In his presence unanswered questions and unresolved tension fade away. Even when much seems unresolved, Jesus is our resolution. After all the suffering, the poet of Lamentations ends with tension. Of course, there's hope. He says, **"Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored!"** (v.21). But God's people aren't yet fully restored (see v.22). That's not how we like to tell stories, *is it?* We like all the tension to be dispelled. We don't like to sit in unresolved silence. We like airtight arguments. But that's not how lament works. Lament invites us to trust. Lament offers no solutions. Lament teaches us to be honest with our emotions and experiences, as we submit ourselves to the unchanging character of God. Lament teaches us to wait with honesty and hope, even if our circumstances doesn't change or more information doesn't come our way. Christian lament is about waiting for a person. That's why Isaiah says, **"they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength"** (Isaiah 40:31). On the cross one aspect of our wait ends. Through Jesus' death we find resolution to our eternal ailment of sin. However, between now and the return of Christ we are still waiting, hoping, and suffering. Lament is the practice of sitting in tension. It's having faith that God is with us in our suffering.

DAY 5

JESUS IS OUR RESOLUTION



1. How have you experienced God's presence in your pain and waiting?
2. What are you waiting for?
3. How does the gospel give you hope and empower you to lament with hope?



Heavenly Father ...

Thank you that you reign forever. Thank you for hearing my cries. Thank you for not forgetting me. By your grace and Spirit give me faith to wait on you and trust that you are indeed the God who is with us, especially in our suffering.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

GOD IS WITH US
IN SUFFERING.

