



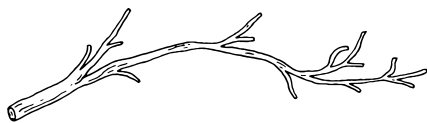
WEEK 4

LAMENTATIONS

FALL READING GUIDE

LAMENTATIONS

GOD MEETS US IN OUR SUFFERING



WEEK 4

SEPTEMBER 26, 2022



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

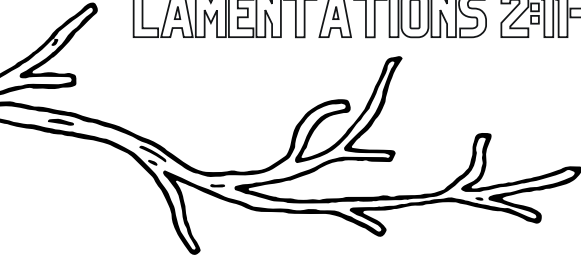
... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.

WEEK 4

LAMENTATIONS 2:11-17



DAY 1

COMMUNAL DESPERATION

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DAY 2

COMMUNAL WOUND

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COMMUNAL PITY

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DAY 1

COMMUNAL DESPERATION



First read **Lamentations 2:11-12**

The poet, Jeremiah, turns inward. He is not simply an observer of consequence and pain and trauma, but a survivor as well; not simply a storyteller, but a character in the drama of lament. Leslie Allen explains, the poet now has “a visceral outburst of his own” (A Liturgy of Grief, 75). Grief comes like unexpected waves. Seeing “the description” and specifically ***“infants and babies faint in the streets of the city,”*** Jeremiah is overwhelmed (v.11). Desperation gives way to demise. Babies are dying of thirst and hunger in their mother’s arms. It feels hopeless. The people are helpless. Lament is the practice of internalizing the effects of sin and suffering. Lament is how we enter into the pain, personally. Lament is how we move from seeing ourselves as passive observers to culpable participants. Jesus lamented (see Matthew 23:37-39). To be sure he was not guilty like us and Jeremiah, but through lament he entered into our pain and even made a way for suffering to cease.

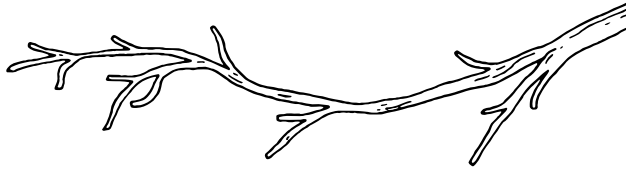
DAY 1

COMMUNAL DESPERATION



1. What does Jesus' lament reveal about his heart?
2. What are you lamenting this week?
3. How does Jesus promise to respond to our desperation and pain?

Heavenly Father ...

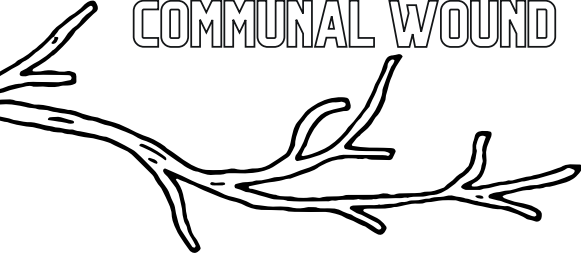


When I think about _____ and _____ I'm overwhelmed with sorrow and grief. I'm desperate. We're desperate. Help me trust you. Help me to be honest and wait patiently for you to bring peace and comfort. Make us more like your Son as we wait

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2

COMMUNAL WOUND

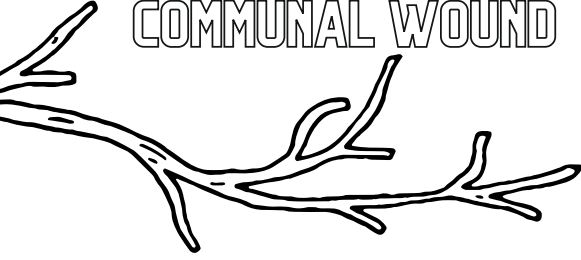


First read **Lamentations 2:13**.

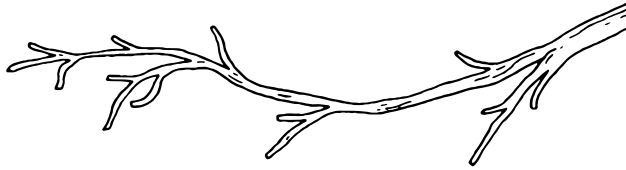
A succession of three questions give the impression of a hopeless search. Is there any comparison? Is there any comfort? Is there any healing? “No,” seems the obvious answer to the rhetorical triad. Author Steven Smith imagines the poet as a medical doctor who tells his patient, “I’m so sorry. There’s nothing else to be done” (275). The wound can’t be sutured. The sickness can’t be cured. Lament tells the truth about the problem’s severity. Lament offers no solution. And this is everyone’s story. Jeremiah has surveyed kings, priests, prophets, mothers, and babies. No single demographic is centered. Rather, as Soong-Chan Rah notes, “Lament requires the full and honest expression of suffering; that experience must encompass the full breath of suffering” (Prophetic Lament, 101). Jeremiah hears all their voices. More importantly Jesus hears all our voices and says, **“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners”** (Mark 2:17). Jesus is the good physician who hears and heals us.

DAY 2

COMMUNAL WOUND



1. What does this verse reveal about lament and the heart of God?
2. Whose voice (or perspective) do you often miss?
What do you think they lament that you don't?
3. How does Jesus heal such a diverse group of people?



Heavenly Father ...

What a loving God you are to hear all our cries for help, comfort, and healing. When it seems like there's no solution, help me to be honest and come to you, the good and compassionate physician.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3

COMMUNAL DECEPTION



First read **Lamentations 2:14**.

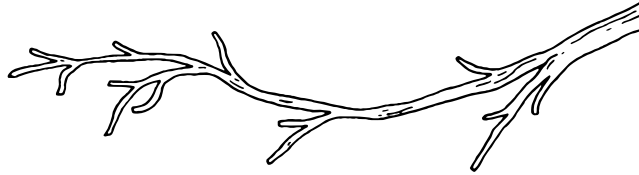
Deception is incredibly destructive. Whether we speak or believe lies, deception never delivers on its promises. **“False and deceptive vision”** and **“oracles that are false and misleading”** caused spiritual confusion in Israel (v.14). To be sure the people are not just victims. Jeremiah laments that their iniquities have been exposed (see v.14a). People believed lies because deception often promises peace and comfort. You see, God sent prophets to speak truth and consequence and warning, but instead of speaking honestly, they were “tickling the people’s ears with rosy predictions of peace and prosperity” (Walvoord, 215 and see Jeremiah 28:1-4; 29:29-32). Everyone is deceived. Deception promises power to those in positions of influence. It promises comfort to the vulnerable. However, true strength and true peace only come through the truth.

DAY 3

COMMUNAL DECEPTION



1. Why do you think God cares so much about the truth, especially hard truths like sin?
2. What lies are you believing this week? About God? About yourself? About others?
3. How does Jesus reveal the fullness of God's truth?



Heavenly Father ...

Like Israel we are prone to trust the promises of deceptive vision and ideas. Usually it's because we want to avoid discomfort and consequence. Forgive us. Help us to rest in the truth, which always brings power and comfort.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4

COMMUNAL SHAME



First read **Lamentations 2:15-16**.

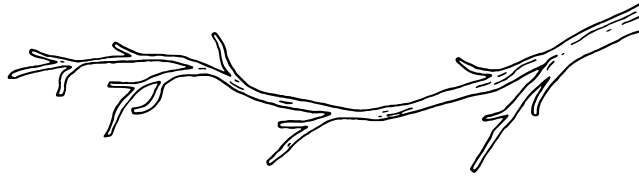
The demise of God’s people is not a secret. Everyone knows about it. Their destruction and suffering are international news. Back in 1:12, the poet identified a group of passersby who now clap their hands, hiss, gnash their teeth, cry out, and wag their heads with ridicule (see vv.15a,16a). They glory in Jerusalem’s grief, **“Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?”** (v.15b). It’s hard to endure consequences. But it’s shame-inducing when enemies witness and celebrate our suffering. Here we see a brilliant connection to where all the pain of laments points--the cross of Christ. The writer of Hebrews invites us to look at Jesus, **“the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame”** (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus does not suffer in secret. He dies in plain sight as his enemies ridiculed him (see Matthew 27:32-44). While we wait for our suffering to cease and our enemies to be silenced, we look to the one who put shame to shame for the sake of joy.

DAY 4

COMMUNAL SHAME



1. What do we learn about God knowing his Son knows exactly what it's like for enemies to glory in his grief?
2. Who has celebrated your suffering? How does this passage comfort and correct you?
3. What does it mean that Jesus despised shame on the cross?



Heavenly Father ...

Shame tells me I'm bad and broken and beyond hope. Jesus tells me I'm his and forgiven and clean. Your Son put shame to shame on the cross. Help me to walk in your joy and love today.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5

COMMUNAL PITY



First read **Lamentations 2:17**.

Once again the poet acknowledges the turmoil has been divinely orchestrated. God has **“thrown down without pity”** (v.17a). Despite all the layers of suffering and sorrow, “The catastrophe was essentially a spiritual matter between Zion and her God” (Allen, 78). Making peace with God is our greatest need (see Ephesians 2:11-22). To be sure, our spiritual well-being does not ensure us that our physical, mental, and emotional challenges will cease. However, our spiritual conflict with God is the most lamentable. Or as Dr. John Piper has said, “Because of Jesus, [we ought to] care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering.” Our physical, mental, and emotional suffering is real and costly. But without peace with God suffering persists forever. Being reconciled with God ensures holistic and lasting peace. Jeremiah wants his readers to face the catastrophe of their spiritual condition so their suffering will eventually cease. Paul tells us that through Christ we have peace with God and, **“hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”** (Romans 5:5). Do you see? For a season there was no pity. But in Christ he pours out mercy and washes away shame.

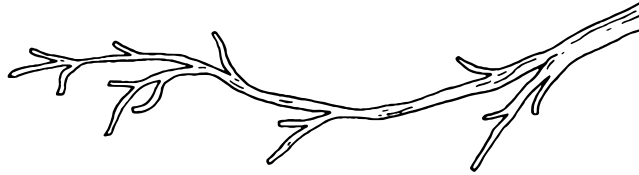
DAY 5

DIVINE RUIN



1. Why is it so hard to experience pain at the hand of God?
2. In what ways are you suffering right now?
3. How does the gospel eternally and also daily make peace with God?

Heavenly Father ...



It's hard to understand why you allow suffering and even execute your justice in painful ways. But I want to trust you more and more. What I don't understand, teach me. When I am suffering, comfort me. Where I am hopeful, encourage me.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

GOD IS WITH US
IN SUFFERING.

