

The background of the entire page is a dense, intricate network of bare tree branches, rendered in a vibrant red color against a light, warm-toned sky. The branches are thin and delicate, creating a complex web of lines that fills the frame. In the top-left corner, there is a black, downward-pointing arrow shape.

**WEEK 7**

# LAMENTATIONS

**FALL READING GUIDE**

# LAMENTATIONS

**GOD MEETS US IN OUR SUFFERING**



**WEEK 7**

**OCTOBER 17, 2022**



**CHURCH IN THE SQUARE**

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**EVERY DAY ...**

**... A PASSAGE TO READ,**

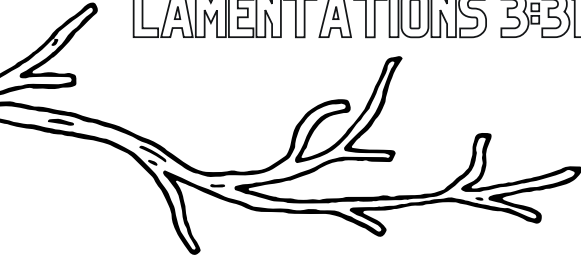
**... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,**

**... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,**

**... A PRAYER TO PRAY.**

WEEK 6

LAMENTATIONS 3:31-51



**DAY 1**

GOD WILL HAVE COMPASSION

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DAY 1

GOD WILL HAVE COMPASSION



First read **Lamentations 3:31-33.**

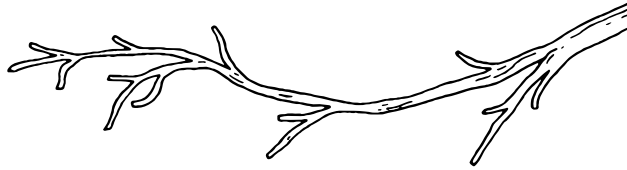
In his immensely helpful book, *Gentle and Lowly*, pastor Dane Ortlund writes, "For God to be merciful is for God to be God" (144). Perhaps this is why Lamentations is such a challenging book for many of us to read; love and grace are fundamental to our conceptions of God. Through the suffering and affliction of Israel, it's easy to lose sight of this prevailing quality. Yet right at the center of this collection of five poems we are reminded, God **"does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men"** (v.33). The poet celebrates that God's compassion always outlasts his wrath. *Why?* Because his covenant faithfulness or "steadfast love" is what flows from his heart. God's love, not his anger, is the truest thing about him. That's why the Apostle John tells us not simply that God *has* love, but that **"God is love"** (1 John 4:8). And the psalmist could be sure that God's **"anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning"** (Psalm 30:5). You may be in the middle of pain and facing some cost of disobedience, but do fear not. It will not last for those who are in Christ. God will have compassion. Because that's who God is.

DAY 1

GOD WILL HAVE COMPASSION



1. How does the centrality of God's love and mercy bring you hope and peace today?
2. How ought God's compassion shape your self-concept?
3. Why does the death and resurrection of Jesus make God's compassion possible?



Heavenly Father ...

*Thank you that you are love, and not anger. Help me to trust that because of Jesus, your compassion always outlasts your wrath for those who are in Christ. That's who you are.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

DAY 2

GOD WILL HAVE JUSTICE



First read **Lamentations 3:34-36.**

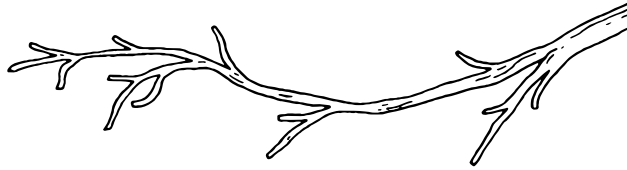
The affliction at God's hand has always been just. God does **"cause grief"** in Israel but he's never been unjust (v.32). God is always fair. **"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne,"** heralds the psalmist (Psalm 89:14a). You see, God's anger subsides not because he calms down. Because his justice is not about his emotions. Peace with God is achieved when justice is served. Ultimately, his Son absorbed his wrath for us (see 1 John 2:1-2). Gospel justice is about love and truth. **"The Lord does not approve"** of violence or supposed brands of justice which are undeserved and oppressive (v.36). Jeremiah clarifies, God's justice is unlike the broken exercises of justice in societies that crush prisoners, deny fairness, and abuse the law (vv.34-35). That's not what's been happening in Lamentations. God's justice is always good, and it's always good for all.

DAY 2

GOD WILL HAVE JUSTICE



1. How have you experienced God's justice?
2. How have you seen injustice in your world recently? Why do you think humanity misuses and misunderstands justice so often?
3. How does the cross give us an enduring vision of justice?



Heavenly Father ...

*Left to ourselves we promote visions of justice which lack either truth or love ... or both. Forgive us. Empower us by your Spirit to live lives of compassion and accountability.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



## DAY 3

## GOD WILL SPEAK

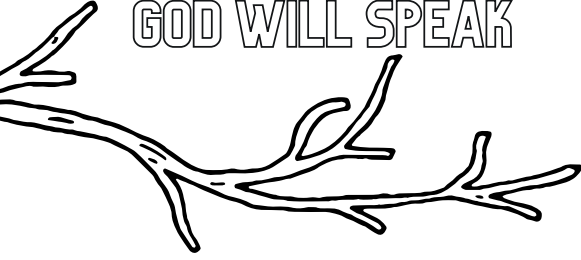


First read **Lamentations 3:37-39**.

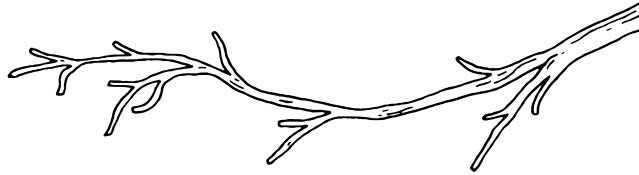
It seems few divine characteristics are taken for granted as regularly as the fact that God speaks. As the great Christian philosopher Francis Schaffer once said, "the infinite-personal God, the full Trinitarian God is there and he is not silent." God is not silent. He speaks. Jeremiah not only establishes this truth, but he highlights the power of God's words. **"Who has spoken and it came to pass?"** (v.37). In other words, God not only speaks but his words are as good as past tense. What he says, happens. What he wills he achieves. Jesus himself is God's Word made flesh (John 1:14). The reality and power of his words ought to humble us. They shouldn't lead us to boastfulness or complaining. We're asked, **"Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins?"** (v.39). Jeremiah is teaching us that asking a question and questioning God are very different. To ask a question is to presume God knows everything we don't. *That's humble*. To question God is to presume we have a moral purity he doesn't. *That's boastful*. Biblical lament helps us to discern this difference. Remembering that God speaks, even in our suffering, reminds us that God wants to be known; he wants to answer our questions. Remembering that God's words always come to pass, reminds us that God is awesome; he is far above us.

DAY 3

GOD WILL SPEAK



1. What does God's willingness to speak reveal about his character?
2. What questions do you have for God this week?
3. How does the cross help us to discern the power of God's Word?



*Heavenly Father ...*

*Thank you that you are there, and you are not silent. Give me faith to trust you when I don't know something and feel unsettled. I know you are good. I know you are truthful. I know you are powerful. I know you love me. Thank you for Jesus.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## DAY 4

## GOD WILL HEAR US



First read **Lamentations 3:40-45**.

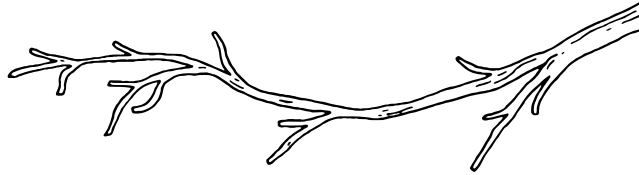
From a series of three questions (vv.37-39), Jeremiah now gives three exhortations. He commands the people to **“test and examine”** their ways (v.40a), **“return to the Lord”** (v.40b), and **“lift up [their] hearts and hands”** (v.41). Personal examination is exposing. It requires admitting we don’t see and understand ourselves by ourselves. We learn to pray like the psalmist, **“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!”** (Psalm 139:23). Examination is the prerequisite for repentance, or “returning” to the Lord. After all, repentance is not the mere admission of sorrow but the demonstration of a renewed mind and transformed heart. Theologian J.I. Packer explained that repentance “only begins when one passes out of what the Bible sees as self-deception” (*Rediscovering Holiness*, 123-24). Spiritual deception is about knowing the word but not obeying the word (see James 1:22-26). That’s why we need to interrogate our sinful ways before we can truly repent and **“lift up our hearts and hands”** to God in worship and confession (v.41). Sin is devastating. It causes God to become angry (v.43). It causes isolation (v.44). It causes God’s image within us (and others) to be marred (v.45). So we must seek to understand why we do what causes such devastation and ask the Lord to renew a right Spirit within us through the power of the resurrection (see Psalm 51 and Philippians 3:7-11).

DAY 4

GOD WILL HEAR US



1. Do you believe God hears you? Why or why not?
2. What do you need to repent of this week? What might it look like to repent?
3. How does the gospel enable you to repent without fear or shame?



Heavenly Father ...

Thank you for hearing me. Thank you for making a way for repentance through Jesus. Search me. Know me. Help me to turn from \_\_\_\_\_ and turn toward \_\_\_\_\_ in obedience and joy.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

## DAY 5

## GOD WILL SEE US



First read **Lamentations 3:46-51**.

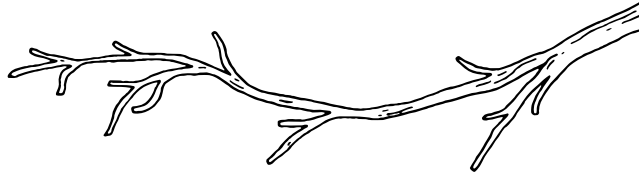
Jeremiah is instructing people to repent. Starting in v.42 he gives them language for confession, or what might be a model prayer. Confession begins with a clear admission of guilt, **“We have transgressed and rebelled”** (v.42). The prayer moves to an acknowledgement of God’s righteous response to sin (vv.43-45), and then, in this passage, confession identifies the sorrow and destruction sin has caused. Three times the poet draws attention to the eyes (vv.48,49,51). Through tears the people ought to see the bleakness of their situation and circumstance, specifically the **“destruction”** and **“fate of all the daughters of my city”** (vv.48,51). While at first blush contrition may seem like a response to what we observe in our hearts and world, it’s actually about a different vantage point. You see, hope again seems lost and out of reach. And yet, true confession is an exercise of hope. Reflecting on these verses professor Soong-Chan Rah explains, “True confession offered despite difficult circumstances is addressed to the only hope of our salvation: the God who sees, who acts, and who brings redemption” (Prophetic Lament, 132). Confession, especially amidst suffering, is not about what we see, but about trusting that despite our circumstance, God still sees us.

DAY 5

GOD WILL SEE US



1. How do we know that God sees us?
2. What keeps you from confessing your sins regularly?  
What do you need to confess today?
3. How does the gospel demonstrate that God sees us?



Heavenly Father ...

*Thank you for seeing me. Often I'm blinded by the pain I feel within me and the problems I see around me. In the middle of my situation, help me to hope and believe and trust that you see me, you care for me, and that you are still with me.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

GOD IS WITH US  
IN SUFFERING.

