

## **2024-02-28 Little Laments Second Midweek Lent**

### **Sermon by The Reverend Cheryl Kester-Schmidt**

During the pandemic, the streets were empty, hospital personnel were over worked, we formed safe bubbles with friends and relatives, and church entered our homes. We did get cleaner air, the sounds of birds and wildlife even in the city, and space to ponder. We were powerless and in that time we discovered once more the practice of lament.

This week we look at little laments, those things we grieve that are small but have the power to hurt us. Little laments soon stack up until all of a sudden the grievance list is large. One disappointment is not so bad, but many ignored over many months perhaps years seems insurmountable. Disappointments that occur one after the other may stretch the limits of our capacity.

These little disappointments or challenges are loss and grieving is appropriate. They give us an opportunity to learn how

to embrace and work through our grief. When we offer our little griefs to God, we discover He has time to address even our non-earth-shattering hurts. Sensing God in these moments prepares us to turn over the big laments as well.

Lament is not a gripe session or venting, though sometimes it helps. We use the words lament and complaint as interchangeable. Which for some of us it is good to know our complaints are really lament. It changes the whole aspect of it. We lament as an appeal to God based on our confidence in His character as we are praising him.

Our lament is proof of our intimate relationship with God. Israel brought their lament to God in the psalms on the basis of His covenant with them. These prayers and songs were not vain attempts to convince a distant deity to notice them. They were asking their Father to act accordingly.

Lament is a pathway to intimacy with God. In the Psalm, Israel lay every emotion and every experience before YHWH, their covenant God. The psalmist reinforces this bond of intimacy

by affirming an attachment. Israel embodied the bond of the covenant by breaking open their hearts before God.

Lament is a prayer for God to act not an outlet for our frustrations. This prayer is not passive but calls God to action. We want God to notice us and to act on our behalf.

Lament is a *participation* in the pain of others. As we pray we learn the suffering of others. We might not be pursued by enemies or hemmed in on every side, but what about the Christians in Israel or Gaza today? What about our friend dealing with a cancer diagnosis?

Lament is not only for the suffering but being in unity with the suffering. We love our neighbor when we allow their experience of pain to become part of our prayers.

Lament is not a final prayer but a prayer *in the meantime*. Most of the lament psalms end with praise of thanksgiving to God for His deliverance. Because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, we know sorrow is not how the story ends. When every tear is

wiped away, when death is swallowed up in victory, when heaven and earth are made new and joined as one, when the saints rise in glorious bodies...then we will sing at last a great, "Hallelujah!"

But for now, in this time and in this space, we lift our lament to God as we wait with hope as we cry - *Come, Lord Jesus!*