

LEARNING TO LAMENT

PSALM 13

Crying is human. We all cry. Just look at Pastor Matt! But lament is uniquely Christian. Lament is the biblical prayer language for those facing doubt, confusion, sadness, and despair.

A third of the 150 Psalms are lament. Think about that. The Psalms are the Jewish songbook and a third of their repertoire voiced and sat in the doubt-filled tension of life. The Psalms are where many of our songs in church come from. Yet, lament is often a missing part of our corporate gatherings.

We are beginning our series by learning to lament so that we have a framework – a prayer language – for turning to God when we're confused, sad, and hurt.

One sermon on each topic is not going to perfectly satisfy your doubt. So we want to equip you with biblical prayer language so that you can bring your concerns to Jesus most of all.

There are 4 elements of biblical lament:

1. TURN to God for help
2. Bring your COMPLAINT to God
3. ASK boldly for help by calling on God to act
4. Choose to TRUST and put your confidence in God

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 13:3

*Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death*

"Lament is the song we sing in the space between pain and promise. It becomes the path between the poles of a hard life and trusting God's goodness. Lament helps us embrace two truths at the same time: hard is hard; hard is not bad."

Mark Vroegop, Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy

Psalms of Lament

Personal	
An individual vocalizing pain, grief, fear, or some other strong emotion	3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31, 39, 42, 43, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 120, 141, 142
Corporate	
Group or nation vocalizing pain, grief, fear, or some other strong emotion	12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 123, 126
Repentant	
Individual or group expressing regret or sorrow for sin	6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143
Imprecatory	
Individual or group expressing outrage and a strong desire for justice	35, 69, 83, 88, 109, 137, 140
Partial	
Sections of lament within other Psalms	9:13-20, 27:7-14, 40:11-17
Debatable	
Psalms that some consider to be lament in total or in part	14, 41, 36, 52, 53, 63, 78, 81, 89, 106, 125, 129, 139

Sources: Rosann Catalano, "How Long, O Lord?" A Systematic Study of the Theology and Practice of Biblical Lament," (Doctoral Thesis, Toronto School of Theology, 1988), 59. Dennis Butcher, "Types of Psalms,"

SERMON NOTES

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SERMON NOTES

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POST SUNDAY STUDY CONTENT

Understanding the Text

1. To whom is the psalmist presenting their laments?
2. What is the psalmist lamenting over?
3. The psalmist does not simply lament in their current circumstances. Instead they seek to get an answer. What is the psalmist asking God to do in the midst of their sorrow?
4. What disposition does the psalmist take while waiting for God to respond? What do they remind themselves of?

Applying the Text

1. Often it is easier to disclose our deepest disappointments to others rather than turning to God and expressing our hurt. Why is this the case?
2. How can we begin to train ourselves to turn to God in our hurt, confusion, and disappointment? What obstacles might be in the way of this discipline?
3. The psalmist presses God to answer their call and address their hurt by asking God to “light up their eyes”. How often do we seek God to answer in tangible ways in the midst of our hurt?
4. The psalmist’s priority is that they would remain steadfast in the face of opposition. In what ways can we press God to “light up our eyes” and grant us perseverance and faith?
5. The psalmist does not end with a laundry list of requests and demands. Instead they end in reminding themselves of the past faithfulness of God in their life. How might this practice impact our current experience of suffering, hurt, and disappointment?
6. In what ways can we consistently remind ourselves of God’s past work in our lives?
7. How might this disposition toward lament grant us capacity and opportunity to proclaim the gospel to our friends, neighbours, and co-workers?