

Finding Life in Lament – Life in Chaos // II Samuel 2:1-27

*How do you respond to loss? Not talking about the Blues being knocked out of the playoffs or the Cardinals losing to the Cubs – although, it was a tough week. How do you respond when it's much more personal. How do you respond when a friend moves far away – who was very close to you? How do you respond to a relationship ending? And, maybe most devastating – how do you respond when someone you care deeply about... dies? **How do you respond to loss?***

David, our young king to be, who we have been following through I Samuel – has just been told that his best friend has died. What was his response ... *together with those with him, he tore his clothes, wept, and fasted. And, we are not sure how long after, maybe the next day, maybe days or weeks – but David wrote down words – that he put to music. You may think – that is a little out there – or I can't relate to writing a song of lament in a loss. Grieving through song is something I think you can relate to more than you know. For generations this is one of the ways we have dealt with loss. Maybe, we don't write the song but we sing the songs other's write. In this case, David was the writer for the nation. Here are just a few of the songs of lament – we have sung over the years – some are old, some are new, look, listen.*

It is a part of who we are - to want to lament, to grieve, to voice our loss together – over a love and **especially over a life**. Today, I believe we all are going to hear things from God that may surprise or be new - or just hard to believe. But He wants us to hear these things because he is a good Father who cares for us! Here is the first:

Because we live in a world of loss - God has given us lament – as a gift, as an invitation to Him:

Matthew 5:4 (ESV) **"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."** – Jesus *There is a gift of joy in our mourning Jesus promises. This is so contrary to what our heart believes. Today – God is going to ask you to believe Him that in lament he has given you one of his greatest gifts. Here is our main truth or idea for today.*

When we lament, we embrace a gift that says, "in loss - our comfort is God's presence."

The risk seems great, but as we lament, we hope that our comfort will not be in our right actions & not in getting over the loss; rather we hope our comfort will be in the reality of God's presence. 3 questions we all need answered today:

01. What does Godly lament look like and what is the point?
02. Why do we struggle with lamenting?
03. How do we embrace lament as a good gift from a good God and Father?

In full disclosure – this is a gift I have struggled embracing over the years. In the last 5 years, I have discovered I don't lament or grieve well. I have suffered my share of loss for sure – just never known quite what to do with it. This year – I think I have lamented more than I ever have in my entire life. I believe my story may be similar to many stories in this room. A lot of sadness and grief – we just don't know what to do with it. So let's ask for God's wisdom and mercy today bc the truth is without His wisdom and mercy – loss moves us farther from God – not to Him. Today he says it can be the reverse. Let's begin -

01. What does Godly lament look like and what is the point?

lament: In community, voicing an honest complaint to God – that finds its hope in Jesus.

This passage is not a prescription – but it does describe the basic components of lament as seen in all of God's word.

- 1) Lament = Being together with other believers.

II Samuel 1:11-12, 17-18 (ESV) **11** Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. **12** And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. **17** And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son, **18** and he said it should be taught to the people of Judah; behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar.

*This is not the idea of misery loves company - so let's make everyone else miserable. NO! In one sense – the Word says when one suffers we all suffer. So even if you don't come together with others to lament- **others hurt**. And, to not believe this is to not know how intricately God connects us together in His family, His body. And even more, when we do lament with others – **we are then walking in the dark moments of our soul with the very body of Christ – so that we experience the very person of Christ. He is the head and when we lament together – we are being touched and walked with by the very reality of God's presence in the darkness. Don't go through your loss alone and don't allow others to go through their loss alone. What do you do? Most all – be there!***

- 2) Lament = Remembering

II Samuel 1:22-24 (ESV) **22** "From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. **23** Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death

they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions.” 24 You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. David remembered Saul and Jonathan. He thought on who they were in God and what they had done because of God’s Spirit. Yes, Saul apart from God was evil. However, when he did walk with God - God did much thru him. David remembers Saul and Jonathan – but he is also remembering who God is.

When I get the honor to come alongside others in a loss of a loved one – I don’t say much. I am learning to be content with silence – and just being there. I pray a lot. And almost always – someone in the family breaks the silence with a story about some recent encounter with their loved one. I listen and if I say anything – I just ask them to tell more – or I ask them about another relevant memory. To remember – brings hurt, but it also is a good thing that brings the reality of that person’s life to bear. In lament – we are not just remembering the person. We are also remembering our God - who God was in this person and who God moved this person to be.

As we remember – we bring the reality and hope of God to bear on our lives.

3) Lament = Voicing the loss honestly to God.

II Samuel 1:19-21 (ESV) 19 “Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen! 20 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult. 21 “You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor fields of offerings! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

David says – don’t tell the Philistines – *they will rejoice in our suffering.*

Of Gilboa where Saul and Jonathan died, he says – *I want you to be desolate. Because there Saul and Jonathan were taken from us and defiled (heads were cut off, bodies dismembered – “not anointed with oil”).*

And the most blunt and honest thing he says, is about Jonathan – his best friend.

II Samuel 1:25-27 (ESV) 25 “How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! “Jonathan lies slain on your high places. 26 I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women. 27 “How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!” Not about sexual love – *but a strong honest statement about their friendship.* This was also an indictment about his marriages *and his sinful behavior in this area of life.*

David gets brutally honest – I can’t breath. I lost my best friend. ***Can you be honest with others and God in your pain?*** It is hard when the pain is suffocating. We can’t think, we over think. We think being honest would be wrong or we are scared to get seen in this way. ***Honest is vital to godly lament!***

“Although brutally honest laments sometimes appear rebellious, they can be acts of faithfulness. In our vulnerability and honesty, we are clinging obstinately to God and demanding for our only hope (God) to see, hear, and act.” Scott A. Ellington “Risking Truth”

The opposite of faith and hope is not doubt – it is dishonesty that voices itself in lies or pretending like you don’t care or you are not hurt.

“Yelling at the darkness does one no good. When we honestly bring complaint to God in our darkness – we find He is there just as He promised and he strangely transforms the darkness – not always with light – but always with communion.” Scott A. Ellington “Risking Truth”

Our God is exceedingly long-suffering with us when we are suffering. Pour out your soul to Him! ***Will you be honest with God about your loss? He invites you to ... so you can experience Him.***

We must be careful in our lament or when walking with others that our goal does not become the removal of our pain. **No the point is not to get over or get through the pain – it is communion with God.** *When the goal is to get over it – we can miss God and in turn miss our comfort – and lose hope.*

When we lament, we embrace a gift that says, “in loss - our comfort is God’s presence”.

02. Why do we struggle with lamenting? *Family Feud Top 4 answers: “Why do we struggle with lamenting?”*

1) We don't know how – or didn't know we are supposed to lament.

Lamenting is not modeled or probably more accurately said – not lamenting is modeled for us. All these phrases are a part of us ... “Big boys/ big girls don't cry.” “Gotta move on.” “There's no crying in baseball.” “Get over it!” “If you don't stop crying I will give you something to cry about.”

2) We don't see the purpose. It is not efficient, it is a waste of time and energy, it helps zero.

*All of this list applies to me – but this is the most relevant to my heart. **My wife and I have been married 26 years.** We are older parents than many, we have a 16 and 19 year old, and not bc that was our dream or “plan” – rather, we walked through several miscarriages. The loss of a baby is ... stunning and shocking to your soul. What was a hammer to my head and heart was a battering ram to my wives. I absolutely did not lament in this loss. My goal was to get thru it – to be strong to help my wife, and to help us move on. In so doing – instead of my wife experiencing the presence of God as we grieved together – all she got from me – was my presence. OK – but not God's presence. **Is this how you see lament: “what's the purpose – it's not efficient, a waste?”***

3) It hurts. Lamenting – just hurts and who really wants to relive our pain over and over and over?

*We all hate pain – but we live in a culture that has made a high art from of avoiding all pain. We must be careful we do not let culture dictate what we embrace and what we avoid. Some of God's greatest gifts come in the most repulsive and unpleasant packages: **evidence – the bloody cross of Christ!***

4) Don't want to be seen as weak or needy – and then avoided. Who wants to be needy or seen as weak, fragile, or broken - and because of that - be avoided?

*Which of these hits home? Ultimately, all of these mixed up reasons and more come into play – lying to us and causing us to **reject the gift of lament as a white elephant – that no one wants!** After today – you will know there is something good mixed into our grief. Some crazy gift God has for us to know Him. But embracing that gift and learning to cry out to God with our complaints in honesty, in remembrance - with others – is scary!*

03. How do we embrace lament as a good gift from a good God and Father?

Something in us was made to lament. Look at a three year old. You don't have to teach them to cry out and bring complaints. *I saw a little girl let her dad have it the other day – I want this, I want this, I wanttttttttt this!* But that is not Godly lament. We desperately need God to do anything he calls us to do – and lamenting is no different. Two things we must begin to believe:

- **Believe: Lament is part of God's character – and that He longs to lament with us and through us.** *It is a part of His character - a part of who He is! Our Triune God is a God who laments. One of the worse things we do when someone has suffered a loss is say – “be strong” (ie – don't lose it.) Or, when they have held it together – we say, “He has been so strong.” Strength is not in not grieving. Look at our God. Don't just look at David, or Job, or Paul. Look at our God. He is not saying – “get over it – be strong.”*

God the Father

Genesis 6:6 (ESV) The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, ... and it grieved him to his heart. **Our Triune God is a God who laments.**

Holy Spirit

Isaiah 63:10 (ESV) But they (Israel – God's people) rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit;

Ephesians 4:30 (ESV) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, ... **Our Triune God is a God who laments.**

Jesus Christ

Isaiah 53:3 (ESV) He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;

John 11:35 (ESV) Jesus wept.

Hebrews 5:7 (ESV) In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death **Our Triune God is a God who laments.**

“Perfect love casts out fear, but it does not exempt a person from feelings of deep sadness and their expression in tears and honest words. Let's not try to be less human than the Son of God.” Glenn Pemberton, “Hurting with God”

Are we saying – are you saying, am I saying, “I am less human than Jesus. I don’t need to lament.” If so, then we are saying, “we are more Godly than Jesus. We can handle pain – Jesus was soft.”

Jesus was not soft – He was our strong God and never stronger as he cried out to His good good Father.

Believe this - Because our God is a God of lament – He wants to lament with us and through us.

Tell Him now in this place at this moment: God I believe, but help my unbelief so we can lament together.

On the cross – we hear Jesus’ most profound lament that reveals the 2nd belief that will move us to embrace and live out lament together. *It is more than an example of how to lament. It is one of God’s greatest gifts of love in action - full of promise and power for you and I.*

Matthew 27:45-46 (ESV) 45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ... “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

As darkness engulfed the whole land and not coincidentally – as darkness engulfed Jesus – we hear the most brutal and honest lament – **COMPLAINT - ever directed toward God.**

Why have you abandoned me? Where have you gone? Where are you?

Ever been there? If your soul has every cried out the ultimate complaint – God, where are you – why have you abandoned me - **you know where Jesus was at this moment.** And, can I say something that should give hope to your soul– He knows where you are – or where you have been, and he knows: we will all be there one day. The question is – will you embrace His gift of lament?

Notice who Jesus directed his lament to – “My God, My God.”

Some have taught, and I know I used to – that God the Father abandoned Jesus on the cross. I don’t believe God did this. Two biblical reasons: 1) The triune God is united as one - always has been and always will be or He ceases being God. 2) Hear the last words of Jesus on the cross.

Luke 23:46 (ESV) Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

Something happened as Jesus took his honest lament to His Father – God met him there in the darkness. So great was his hope that the last words from his last breath – were – you are here!

God did not leave Jesus on the cross because Jesus was holy and right – He was God.

Jesus took on the punishment for our sin – but he never became sinful or he was not holy God.

A part from Jesus, You and I are sinful. In the finished work of Christ – we are holy and right before God. And like Jesus, God will not leave us or abandon us no matter how dark it gets or feels.

- **Believe: In our darkness, because of Jesus - God will not abandon us.**

Because of this – we can cry out and experience the reality of His presence as we lament.

When we hide our hurt and pain – the darkness just engulfs us and all we hear is lies – **you are alone.**

When we lament – when we take our loss our hurt to God. When by the power of His Spirit we stubbornly refuse to stop bringing our complaint to God – **God’s presence, that never left you, will comfort you - better than C. Aguilera, J Cash, J Bieber, T Swift, S Hunt, F Sinatra, - the song of lament of our Savior is sung by him in your soul and as we sing this song with him – we experience – the presence and comfort of God**

Fran reminded me of a moment when we were walking through one of our miscarriages. In the midst of one of those days when we had found out we lost the baby- our friends gathered around us and prayed and wept. And David Terry, prayed – God may John and Fran rest tonight. The next day they asked how the night went for us and Fran said – first night of sleep in many days – and David said awesome, - but we didn’t sleep much. Kept waking up all night – as we did – we prayed for you guys. I missed lamenting with my wife that week like I could have – but God allowed us not to miss Him – because our friends were lamenting with us.

Family – let’s come together and ask our God to help us believe:

1) Our God is a good Father who is a God of lament who longs to lament with us the through us.

2) Because of Jesus – God will not abandon us. *May this move us to ...*

Embrace His gift of lament that says, “in loss - our comfort is God’s presence”.