

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

September 6, 2026 *"Psalms: Songs of the Soul. A song of Lament"*

I Intro.

We're moving into fall and we're starting a new series. There's a lot going on at NCC and you'll want to keep up with everything that's happening. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. This is our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family. If there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Sunday.

Let's talk about music. **How many of you are upbeat, happy music people? How many of you have that thing inside of you that needs to listen to sad, melancholy, more soulful music?** (Not all the time, but you just need it at times). There just seems to be something about sorrowful, soulful music that connects deep inside of us that nothing else does. There are a lot of things in the world where we can experience joy. Kids, babies, certain locations, sports teams winning, vacations, etc. But there aren't as many things that reach into that soulful place within us that don't come from loss or grief. Sometimes we just need to go to that place, and experience the release and relief of feeling our sorrow, or just deep feelings. Not to camp out there. But to give our bodies permission to 'feel deeply'. Scripture calls this lament. First, we need to lay some foundation. **What is lament? Why is lament important? Lament is basically the intentional practice of expressing feelings of deep sorrow or grief that comes through the struggles of life.**

Physical benefits of allowing ourselves to lament. Lamenting releases of three hormones.

1. Prolactin- is linked to when we are being cared for, or caring for someone else. In the connection of being with someone or someone is intentionally 'with us'. There is a bonding that happens when this hormone is released. It's also important in breast feeding.

2. Oxytocin- is the 'connection hormone'. This hormone creates a bridge between you and those who are with you. Scientists have found that shared sorrow builds community. It promotes trust and connection. Also released in breast feeding.

3. Dopamine- helps counter anxiety. This hormone encourages risk taking, vulnerability, and attraction in establishing relationships. It helps us to move into places we wouldn't normally go. And relaxes a lot of the body's automatic fight or flight reactions. Lamenting together, and sharing struggles, creates real relationship bonds that don't happen in the same way outside of lament.

Spiritual benefits of lamenting. Lamenting well is a soul cleansing of built up pain, hurts, sorrows, and grief. Communal lament allows the entire group to help those who are grieving to carry the loss. Lament is at the heart of surrender. The situation I'm in is not in my control. We mentioned bonding

and community building. Communal lament says; *“you are not alone”*. Recognizing our own hurt and pain makes us more compassionate. Voicing our sadness, getting into the sadness in our body, activates the divine presence planted inside of us. Lamenting moves us to seek out something greater than ourselves. And of course that greater thing outside of ourself is God.

Today we start a new series about the Psalms called: “Songs of the Soul”. The psalms were written as a way for the people of God, in community, to experience the presence of God that fills their souls. That’s what music can do. It’s why we have a time of worship. We’re going to hit psalms of lament, thanksgiving, praise, and wisdom. Today will be about our soul needing psalms of lament.

So, how can we lament well...so that it feeds our soul?

Lament was important, because people needed a safe space to ‘feel’ AND voice how hard things can be. Especially to get together with other like-minded people and lament together. But also because after you give people permission to honestly and genuinely feel and express their feelings, then they have created space for God to fill them with good things. We all know how unhealthy it is for us to hold these things in. Remember these lament psalms were actual songs that people sang. So, lament isn’t unfaith, it isn’t doubt. Lament is the honest expression of what it feels like going through struggle.

Psalms 22 (is a masterclass in lament done well). It’s the psalm Jesus said from the cross. Of all the lament psalms, it best encapsulates all the things that make a good lament important. I’m only going to be able to hit the highlights, so I want to encourage you to read Psalm 22 a couple more times this week. Notice as we go through it the back and forth from lament to recognizing who God is. This psalm gives us permission to identify specific complaints and feelings, but constantly reminds us of who God is, so we don’t spiral into despair as you lament.

The title is: *For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune “Doe of the Dawn.”* We have no idea what this tune was. It’s lost to history. But the people knew. As we go through this psalm of lament I want you to imagine coming to church, and this being the service ? What do you tell the kids? “ *Yeah, today is going to be the really depressing sad psalm*”.

1. Lament requires radical honesty. (vs 1-2) I talked about the beauty of honesty before.

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far away when I groan for help? Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer. Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.

It begins with a personal complaint directly against God. No platitudes or cliché phrases. Or even a list of specifics. It’s not performative, or sanitized. Just pure pain poured out. Real shared pain of disappointment with God. Which is telling, because from the very start we seem to be able to center our lament and feelings on the nature of God. Who he is. What we believe he said he would do for us. This beginning assures us we can bring our real self to God. This is the heart of true lament.

2. Lament surfaces past remembrances but can’t quite embrace them...yet. (vs 3-5)

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. Our ancestors trusted in you, and you rescued them. They cried out to you and were saved. They trusted in you and were never disgraced.

Then comes the first bubbles of remembrance. As you lament, you feel this tension of back and forth about how you feel about God. There is the pointing back to what we’ve been told, and remembering about God. Stories passed down from our ancestors. Celebrated in communal worship, we sing about who God is. We may not be able to quite feel it yet. This shows the importance of remembrance and

gathering in community. This is Other people celebrating God, when you're not quite there. Find strength in the hope of others in the midst of your lament.

3. Lament wrestles with past stories of God against current circumstances. (vs 6-8)

But I am a worm and not a man. I am scorned and despised by all! Everyone who sees me mocks me. They sneer and shake their heads, saying, "Is this the one who relies on the LORD? Then let the LORD save him. If the LORD loves him so much, let the LORD rescue him!"

Back to the lament of a life that seems and feels unfair, out of balance with others who claim to follow God. Always a struggle with; *"what am I doing wrong compared to other people?"* After you pour out the pain, you begin to feel and direct your hurt about others. This is the expression of feeling isolated, alone, in your suffering. Remember, this is being sung in worship...together

4. Little essences of God still bubble up. (vs 9-11)

Yet you brought me safely from my mother's womb and led me to trust you at my mother's breast. I was thrust into your arms at my birth. You have been my God from the moment I was born. Do not stay so far from me, for trouble is near, and no one else can help me.

Again, another reminder, remembrance, of God's presence in the past. Who God is, so we can begin to shape our thoughts and how we will pray specifically. This is the beginning of a movement, towards an appeal for help. It may not fix our current situation. But sometimes that's where you go to find peace in the midst of no peace. It may have felt like God had abandoned you. But you have nowhere else to go. No one else to turn to. I want you to be very okay with this feeling. This is the purpose of lament. And this is the story of many who come to NCC. *"God, you're my last chance and hope."*

5. Good, effective lament MUST be thorough and complete. (vs 12-18)

Here we go. You have to get it all out. You have that first cry of shock. And then the intense cry when reality hits. And you let it all pour out. Mention everything that bubbles to the surface.

My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls; fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in! Like lions they open their jaws against me, roaring and tearing into their prey. My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, melting within me. My strength has dried up like unbaked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead. My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced^[a] my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. My enemies stare at me and gloat.¹⁸ They divide my garments among themselves, and throw dice^[b] for my clothing.

Since we know Jesus recited this psalm, we can see other references to him also. Now we have a longer section of this pouring out...like water, in the lament. It's the same thing as what happens draining an infection. It's poetic, not listing reality. But it's pouring out how reality of life hits. It's putting into words what their life 'feels' like. Which seems to be a really important part of lamenting well.

6. Lament then must move to an honest appeal. (vs 19-21)

If you're remembering the God of your past. Even if it's other people's accounts. At some point you have to make that call out to God yourself. That's where honest lament, done well, should take you. It's that slow, unsure, frightened approach to God. It's a scared hungry dog who's learning to trust again. I have these deep needs inside, but I've been hurt, and don't know where I can turn to.

O LORD, do not stay far away! You are my strength; come quickly to my aid! Save me from the sword; spare my precious life from these dogs. Snatch me from the lion's jaws and from the horns of these wild oxen.

Here is the turn, the pivot, in the lament from the back and forth between the struggles of life. What

everything 'feels' like. It's the gift of desperation. Not only remembering what God has done in the past. But now calling on that God who was there in other difficult circumstances to be with him again.

7. Good lament will move from venting, to remembering, to calling upon, and then testifying.

This last part of Psalm 22 takes us to where good lamenting, done honestly, whole-heartedly, will lead us. True honest lament can't get stuck in wallowing. At some point you have to get up, clean yourself off, and get on with life. In the story of David losing son with Bathsheba. We see him getting up and moving on. There is no perfect time frame here. But this is where you're "going to".

I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among your assembled people. Praise the LORD, all you who fear him! Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob! Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy. He has not turned his back on them, but has listened to their cries for help. I will praise you in the great assembly. I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you. The poor will eat and be satisfied. All who seek the LORD will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy. The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him. All the families of the nations will bow down before him. For royal power belongs to the LORD. He rules all the nations. Let the rich of the earth feast and worship. Bow before him, all who are mortal, all whose lives will end as dust. Our children will also serve him. Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord. His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born. They will hear about everything he has done.

The first obvious point is that a good, healthy, productive lament is like a good cough with chest congestion. Get all that junk out. You then make room for the good things. And this isn't the same trust and hope they had before their struggle. David is coming out of this situation changed, new, showing wounds and scars from what he went through. He is stronger, wiser, purified, and he is going to tell his story about how God carried him through this struggle.

III Challenge.

Hopefully we've made the point about the importance of good lament. But we still have to admit lamenting doesn't fix the situation. It's not a solution. You still may be feeling isolated, abandoned and ashamed. You may still be stuck in that place, situation, still carrying that loss. You cannot just rush through this process to get to the end. Honest lament takes as long as it takes. But doing it communally helps. That's why we gather as a family of followers. As we see all through scripture, and what science seems to support, is that there is significant benefit to lamenting well. There are specific physical and spiritual benefits too. Jesus in the garden. Jesus quoting this exact psalm on the cross. Lament is essential for us to validate what it is we're going through. To clean out all of the, 'me' that the lament is coming from. Then it makes room for the goodness, faithfulness, and fullness of God to fill that space. It's normal to experience and feel the things you do about your life. You are not alone in what you're feeling. And the keys to come through (not out of) a necessary lament.

- 1. Voice your pain and struggles, both feelings and specifics.**
- 2. Remembering God's presence in the past, and the lives of others.**
- 3. Call upon God.**
- 4. Then eventually testifying of the goodness of God.**

Lament isn't about 'feeling' faith or hope. Lament is about choosing faith and hope. You don't have to be afraid to say all the hard things out loud. God has been faithful before. Even if I can't see or feel it now, I am choosing to trust it's true. It's not optimism or positivity. It's real, deep-seated hope. And this faith and hope is found WITHIN the lament, not in spite of it. And it's an important song of our soul.