

Lamenting in Hope

Micah 7:1-17

“Woe is me!” - Micah’s Lament

Lament:

- A passionate expression of grief, sorrow, and mourning
- Emotion over the most dire, grim, ruinous circumstances
- Not whining, complaining, griping, grumbling
- Not selfish pity party

What is Micah lamenting?

The world around him

- **SPIRITUAL ISOLATION:** (v. 2, 4)
 - Loss of the faithful and righteous
 - The righteous are nowhere to be found
 - People devour others to get what they want
- **NATIONAL RUIN:** (v. 3)
 - Corrupt leadership (Prince, judge, great man)
 - Skilled at doing evil
 - Layers of leadership work together to do greater evil
- **SOCIAL PERIL and RELATIONAL INFIDELITY:** (v. 5-6)
 - Broken relationships in all realms
 - Can’t trust social relationships: neighbors and friends
 - Can’t trust family relationships
 - Those who live with you have become your enemy

Micah feels like a barren, empty, ravaged harvest (v. 1)

- Lonely
- Result of injustice
- Betrayed

The Regularity of Lamenting for God’s People

60/150 psalms are categorized as lament psalms (40%)

- “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” Psalm 13:1
- “O God, why do you cast us off forever?” Psalm 74:1
- “How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever? Will your jealousy burn like fire?” Psalm 79:5

Jeremiah: the weeping prophet

- “But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock has been taken captive.” Jeremiah 13:17

Jeremiah’s Lamentations

- “For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my spirit; my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed.” Lamentations 1:16

The Need for Lament

We must learn to meaningfully and honestly express the anguish of our hearts before the Lord

We must not ignore or suppress pain and suffering

We must not address anguish superficially

We must guard against indifference and complacency

- Speedy pace of life/busyness of mind leads to numbness in processing the world around us

“It is hard to avoid despair when your nation and the cause of Christ in it seem to be going to wreck and ruin...What is it like to be a remnant believer in a society that is going down the sewer?... sometimes you just want to cry.” -Dale Ralph Davis

Lament and Look

“But as for me, I will look to the LORD;
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
my God will hear me.” (v.7)

The “But...” amidst the Lament

- But as for me...
 - Look to the Lord
 - Our focus is placed upon the Lord, not the surrounding circumstances
 - Our counsel comes from the Lord, not the wisdom of the world
 - Wait for the God of my salvation
 - Wait = hope
 - “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1
 - Personal: the God of my salvation
 - He will hear
 - Confident expectation

The “But...” amidst the Psalms of Lament

- “But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.” Psalm 13:5-6
- “Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” Psalm 74:12
- “But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.” Psalm 79:13

“After the death of his son and after writing of his grief in Lament for a Son, Nicholas Wolterstorff presents a compelling case for lament as part of life. He maintains that like poles on the globe, praise and lament orient the life of the believer. Both are essential in the life of faith, since life involves joys and sorrows, celebration and suffering, praise and lament. ‘Lamentation is the language of suffering and the praise of God is the language of joy.’ It is impossible to appreciate one without the other. Each extreme demands walking on the edge of language, the edge of human experience, employing rich imagery to describe the indescribable. Wolterstorff opines, ‘It’s an illusion to suppose or to postulate that there could ever be a relationship with God in which there was only praise and never lamentation.’” “The Place of Lament in the Christian Life” by Brian Webster and David Beach

Confidence amidst Lament (v. 8-10)

Trials will come

- “When I fall...” “When I sit in darkness...” (v. 8a)

Right view of sinfulness

- Sin has consequences
- “I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him.” (v. 9a)

Confidence in the Lord

- “The Lord will be a light to me.” (v. 8b)
- “...until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.” (v. 9b)

God’s people develop a bold brokenness: broken under indignation, bold in his grace

He does not shield us from trials, but from faithlessness

- “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11
- “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:6-7

Restoration beyond Lament (v. 11-13)

The dwelling place of the Lord will be firmly built and established

- Boundaries will be extended
- People of all nations will come

Those dwelling outside of the Lord will be desolate

Glory after Lament (v. 14-17)

The Lord will shepherd His flock

He will perform marvelous works of salvation for His people

The nations will experience judgement

The nations will have fear of the Lord (trembling, dread, horror)

Jesus Laments

- Over the spiritual state of the people
 - “And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.” Luke 19:41
- Over death
 - “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept.” John 11:33-35
- Over separation from the Father
 - “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ Matthew 27:46

Woe is me! – Our Lament

Political corruption in America
 War between Israel and Hamas
 War in Ukraine
 Sexual corruption
 LGBTQ
 Transgenderism
 Rampant pornography
 Regularity of abortion
 Public school education

Feminism
 Racism
 Divorce rates
 Mental health crisis/suicide rates
 Gun violence
 False/progressive Christianity
 Discord within the church
 Social media
 Economic corruption

But as for me...I will LAMENT and LOOK

Faith in the midst of ruin

Faith rises in antithesis

“But as for me, I will look to the LORD;”

- Stand against
 - “Do not be conformed to this world...” Romans 12:2
 - “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:15-17
 - “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” John 15:19
- Stand alone
 - “For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.” Matthew 10:35-36
 - “Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’” Matthew 16:24

Faith endures in anticipations

“I will wait for the God of my salvation;”

- Desperate: personal inability to change the situation
 - “John answered, ‘A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.’” John 3:27
- Expectant: waiting for proven redeeming power
 - “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:17-20
 - “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” 2 Peter 3:8-9

Faith rests in assurance

"...my God will hear me."

- God is not distant and deaf
 - "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3:12
 - "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us." 1 John 5:14

Faith Rests in Christ Alone

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:14-16

He is our:

Confidence amidst lament

- "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
- "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." 1 Peter 4:19

Restoration beyond lament

- "And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'" Rev. 21:5
- "For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

'Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory

O death, where is your sting?'

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:53-57

Glory after lament

- "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:4
- "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Col. 3:4

Look to Him and Live

DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference in biblical lamenting and grieving of the world?
2. When do you feel as though you have ever honestly lamented before the Lord?
3. How can we encourage one another to honestly lament?
4. How can we guide one another to look to Christ amidst lamenting?
5. What counsel or actions could be harmful or hurtful to yourself or others amidst lamenting?
6. Where have you seen the Lord strengthen your faith through lamenting?

HOMEWORK

READ

Psalm 12: communal psalm of lament
Psalm 25: personal psalm of lament

REFLECT

1. Identify each of these components in each psalm:
 - Address to God
 - Description of complaint
 - Request for God's help
 - Expression of trust in God
2. How does the psalmist lament and look to God?
3. What does the psalmist focus their faith upon? Confidence? Restoration? Glory?
4. How will this week's study give you freedom and courage to honestly lament?
5. How will this week's study redirect your focus amidst your lamenting?