

Lenten Evening Worship

February 21, 2024

Worship 7:00 PM

Opening Litany

The prophet Joel calls us to return to the Lord with all our hearts.

Lord, use this holy season of Lent to reorient our lives toward you.

As we raise our voices in lament,

comfort us and give us cause for hope.

Bless our worship, our work, and our play.

Guide us with your Spirit, that we may follow where you lead in confidence and trust.

Gathering Song

Before the Waters Nourished Earth

ACS 1049

1 Be - fore the wa - ters nour - ished earth or night im -
2 This Love re - mained as time re - vealed the loss of
3 De - spair, so deep it bears no name, or sor - rows
4 The Love that called cre - a - tion good all good - ness

ag - ined morn - ing, a Love con - ceived the
E - den's glo - ry and, griev - ing, holds in
par - a - lyz - ing can - not re - voke Love's
still is bring - ing. This Love turns death a -

u - ni - verse and rev - eled in its form - ing.
mem - o - ry each trag - ic hu - man sto - ry.
faith - ful claim to dwell with - in our dy - ing.
gain to life and si - lence in - to sing - ing.

Let us pray:

Loving God, the prophets, psalm writers, and countless other people of faith have given us an example of how to hold our grief before you through songs of lament. Hear our cries today. Give us the courage to name our deepest sorrow and to hand it over to you. Heal our wounded hearts and give us peace. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

What Is Lament?

Our reading is from Lamentations beginning at the 3rd chapter

3:19-26

The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "

The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Reflection

What is lament? The Bible is filled with examples of faithful people of God offering up bitter, sorrowful, or even angry prayers to God. Even Jesus laments over Jerusalem and weeps at the death of a friend. To lament, to grieve, to weep – these are all part of the life of faith. Often we are too quick to push aside the uncomfortable feelings of anger, grief, and loss. We have lost, in some ways, the spiritual discipline of lament: acknowledging the grief that is part of everyday life, holding it, and then placing it gently (or forcefully!) in God's hands. This Lent we will explore the laments found in scripture and relearn the discipline and the gift of holy lament.

Questions for Reflection

- What comes to mind when you hear the word lament?
- How comfortable are you with the concept of lament, whether as an individual or as a community?
- Do you feel lament is an important spiritual discipline? Why or why not?

Hymn

I want Jesus to walk with me

ELW 325

1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;
 2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me; walk with
 3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

me; I want Je - sus to walk with me;
 in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me; walk with
 when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

me; all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,
 when my heart is al - most break - ing,
 when my head is bowed in sor - row,

Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me. walk with me.
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

Text: African American spiritual
 Music: SOJOURNER, African American spiritual; arr. hymnal version
 Arr. © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

Prayers

Trusting that God hears our every cry and promises to wipe away every tear, we offer our prayers and our laments for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Hearing the words "Hear us, O God" God's people may reply, "your mercy is great."

Free us to present ourselves fully to you in all our messiness. Enable us to share with you all that worries us or concerns us, knowing that you love us to the end. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Call us to not only lament the damage we have done to your creation but to take part in the healing of it. Suppress our greedy nature so that all can live with a sufficiency. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Encourage us to use whatever power we have to create a community, a country, and a world where all people are recognized as beloved children. May there be no person whose worth is questioned. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Loving God, receive these prayers and those that remain unspoken, and in return grant us your peace, all for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Gathered into one across time and space by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us, using whatever version of that prayer comforts you. We pray:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Blessing

The Lord watches over your going out and your coming in. The Lord shields your joys and holds your sorrows. God bless you and keep you this day and always.

Amen.

Hymn

Spirit, Open My Heart

ACS 1043



1 God, re - place my ston - y heart with a heart that's
 2 Write your love up - on my heart as my law, my
 3 May I weep with those who weep; share the joy of

kind and ten - der. All my cold - ness and
 goal, my sto - ry. In each thought, word, and
 friend and neigh - bor. As I live from day to

Refrain

fear deed, to your grace I now sur - ren - der.
 day, may my liv - ing bring you glo - ry.
 love will be my fin - est la - bor.

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947
 Music: WILD MOUNTAIN THYME, Irish melody; adapt. Alfred V. Fedak, b. 1953
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Go in peace. Christ is with you.
Thanks be to God.

Presiding Minister: Rev. Diana Edis

Musician: Sheila Seidemmann

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* Our Bible readings are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, covered under AF #SB157842.

Holy Lament

This series explores various kinds of lament found in scripture. Each week we will consider what it means to sit with our grief rather than try to push it aside. We will discover that many faithful believers have wrestled with grief, sorrow, and questions for God about why the innocent suffer. This series understands lament as one of the more faithful things we can do. When we approach God with honesty and humility, and we admit that some things are too big for our hearts to bear, we will find there not a disapproving God but one who weeps with us. We will find a God who can take our grief and disappointment and transform them into holy joy and renewed hope. We will learn, ultimately, that Jesus' death on the cross – the place to which the season of Lent leads us – is the reason we never mourn as those without hope.