

A close-up photograph of a dark, wet surface, possibly asphalt or pavement, with numerous raindrops of varying sizes. The raindrops have created a series of concentric ripples that spread outwards from the point of impact. The overall color palette is dark blue and grey, with highlights from the raindrops. The text is overlaid on this background.

Class 3

The Practice of Lament

Park Street Church
Fall 2016

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THE REASON FOR GOD and *THE PRODIGAL GOD*

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Walking with God
through
Pain and Suffering

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Tentative Schedule

Oct 2: Suffering, Avoidance, & Secularism

Oct 9: Forgiveness and Suffering (Knight)

Oct 15: The Practice of Lament

Oct 23: Theology of Retribution & the Cross

Oct 30: Suffering & God's Will

Nov 13: Suffering & Disability (Warf)

Nov 20: Suffering & Dementia

Nov 27: Suffering & Evolution (Cahill)

Dec 4: The Christian Art of Dying

Dec 11: Becoming Worthy Counselor

Class 3:

The Practice of Lament

Topics to Cover:

- A. What Happened to Lament?
- B. Thinking theologically about lament
- C. Example of lament in Scripture

Where?
Why?
How long?
Doubt
Confusion
Weeping
Downcast
Complaint
God's Absence
Purposeless?



Trust
Hope
Joy
Faith
Patience
Self-control
God's faithfulness
Redemption

James 1: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Thinking theologically of Lament

- Lament acknowledges:
 - Evil and suffering are real
- Comparison with Buddhism
 - Life is suffering & utterly impermanent
 - Suffering is caused by desire
 - Suffering ends by ending all desire for self, for others
 - 8-fold path including complete focus on the moment
 - Implies suffering itself is ultimately an illusion

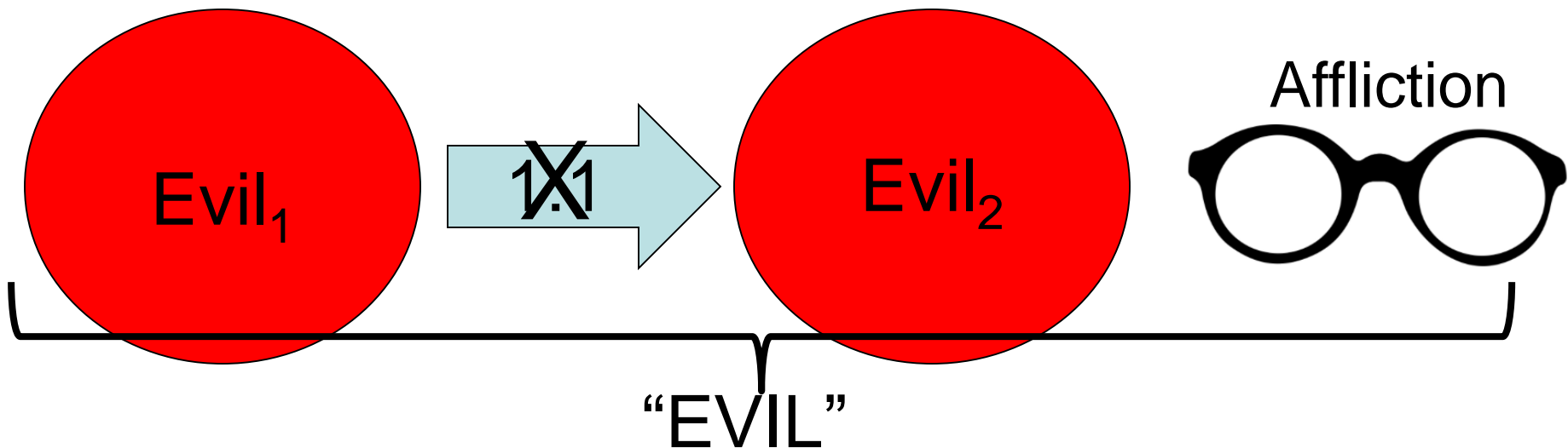
Thinking theologically of Lament

The king smiled weakly, but his eyes radiated peace. He closed his eyes and passed from this life. Queen Gotmai and Yasodhara began to cry. The ministers sobbed in grief. The Buddha folded the king's hands on his chest and then motioned for everyone to stop crying. He told them to follow their breathing... [At the funeral, the Buddha said] "A person who has attained the Way looks on birth, old age, sickness and death with equanimity."

Thich Nhat Hanh's biography of the Buddha, *Old Path White Clouds*

Thinking theologically of Lament

- Not desire but disordered desire leads to evil, which causes suffering
- Lament is the path to engage suffering?
 - Evil₁ = moral deprivation & rebellion from God
 - Evil₂ = evil's impact creates suffering
 - Suffering = affliction / the cry of the soul



Thinking theologically of Lament

- Lament: lit. mourning / weeping / crying
- the Bible is soaked in tears
- Weeping is a physical response to strong emotions, especially our encounter with suffering.
- Tears are often sacramental signs that the world is broken

Thinking theologically of Lament

God weeps

Genesis 6:5-6

Isaiah 15:2,5; 16:9; 22:4

Jeremiah 9:3, 48:32

Jesus wept: John 11:35

Thinking theologically of Lament

Jesus Weeps

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved^[e] in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

Psalms Of Lament

* 43%
Lament or
Complaint
Psalms

Lament Psalms	
Community	12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89*, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129
Individual	3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27*, 28, 31, 36*, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52*, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89*, 120, 139, 141, 142
Specialized Lament Psalms	
Penitential	6, 32*, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143
Imprecatory	35, 69, 83, 88, 109, 137, 140
Thanksgiving (Todah) Psalms	
Community	65*, 67*, 75, 107, 124, 136*
Individual	18, 21, 30, 32*, 34, 40:1-11, 66:13-20, 92, 108*, 116, 118, 138
Specialized Thanksgiving (Todah) Psalms	
Salvation History	8*, 105-106, 135, 136
Songs of Trust	11, 16, 23, 27*, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131
Hymnic Psalms	
Hymn and Doxology	8*, 19:1-6, 33, 66:1-12, 67*, 95, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 114, 117, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
Liturgical Psalms (for Public Worship)	
Covenant Songs	50, 78, 81, 89*, 132
Royal / Enthronement	2, 18, 20, 21, 29, 45, 47, 72, 93, 95*, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 110, 144
Songs of Zion	46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122
Temple Liturgies	15, 24, 68*, 82, 95*, 115, 134
Community Psalms	
Wisdom Psalms	1*, 36*, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133
Torah Poems	1*, 19:7-14, 119

Structure of Lament

7 structural elements (rarely all in 1 Ps)

1. Invocation
2. Plea to God for help
3. Complaint(s)
4. Confession of sin or statement of innocence
5. Curse of enemies / call for justice
6. Confidence in God's response
7. Hymn or blessing

Characteristics of Lament

1. Context is purposely vague
2. To Yahweh – covenantal relationship
3. Absolute honesty – *where are you?*
4. Question, frustration compatible with faith
5. Confession & Innocence
6. Individual & collective prayers
7. Fulfillment in Christ – Only Jesus can truly sing each Psalm

Save Me, O God

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. Of David.

- 69** Save me, O God!
For the waters have come up to my neck.^[a]
- 2 I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.
- 3 I am weary with my crying out;
my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim
with waiting for my God.
- 4 More in number than the hairs of my head
are those who hate me without cause;
mighty are those who would destroy me,
those who attack me with lies.
What I did not steal
must I now restore?
- 5 O God, you know my folly;
the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.
- 6 Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me,
O Lord GOD of hosts;
let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me,
O God of Israel.
- 7 For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach,
that dishonor has covered my face.
- 8 I have become a stranger to my brothers,
an alien to my mother's sons.

John 15:25

John 2:17

Romans
15:23

- 9 For zeal for your house has consumed me,
and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.
- 10 When I wept and humbled^[b] my soul with fasting,
it became my reproach.
- 11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword to them.
- 12 I am the talk of those who sit in the gate,
and the drunkards make songs about me.
- 13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD.
At an acceptable time, O God,
in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving
faithfulness.
- 14 Deliver me
from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies
and from the deep waters.
- 15 Let not the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up,
or the pit close its mouth over me.

- 16 Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.
- 17 Hide not your face from your servant,
for I am in distress; make haste to answer me.
- 18 Draw near to my soul, redeem me;
ransom me because of my enemies!
- 19 You know my reproach,
and my shame and my dishonor;
my foes are all known to you.
- 20 Reproaches have broken my heart,
so that I am in despair.
I looked for pity, but there was none,
and for comforters, but I found none.
- 21 They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

Matthew 27:34, 48;
Mark 15:36; Luke
23:36; John 19:28, 29

Romans 11:9, 10

22 Let their own table before them become a snare;
and when they are at peace, let it become a trap.^[c]

23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see,
and make their loins tremble continually.

24 Pour out your indignation upon them,
and let your burning anger overtake them.

25 May their camp be a desolation;
let no one dwell in their tents.

Acts 1:20

26 For they persecute him whom you have struck down,
and they recount the pain of those you have wounded.

27 Add to them punishment upon punishment;
may they have no acquittal from you.^[d]

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;
let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

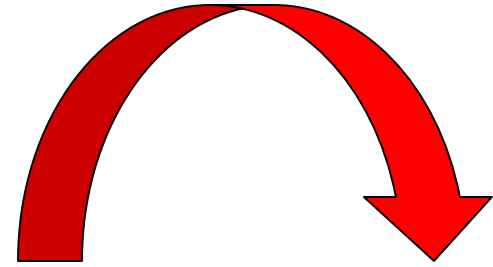
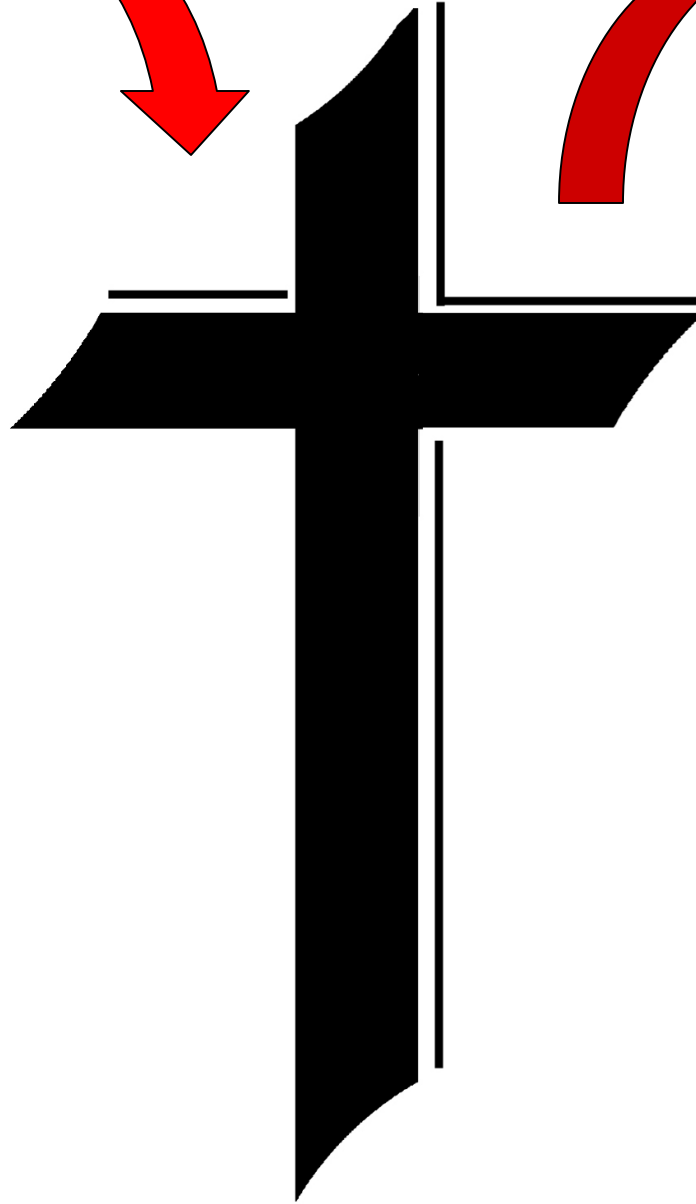
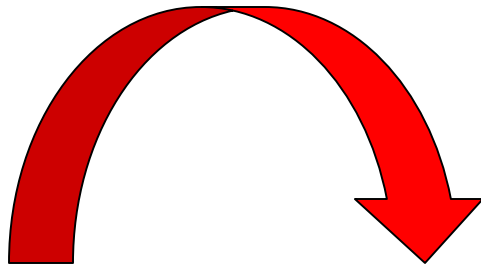
29 But I am afflicted and in pain;
let your salvation, O God, set me on high!

30 I will praise the name of God with a song;
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.

31 This will please the LORD more than an ox
or a bull with horns and hoofs.

32 When the humble see it they will be glad;
you who seek God, let your hearts revive.

33 For the LORD hears the needy
and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.



How do we Recover Lament?

Write a lament:

1. Address God with his names and attributes
2. State your complaint(s)
3. Express your trust, tied to who God is
4. Make your appeal – what are you asking God to do? What is it that you *really* need
5. Express certainty: assure God that you believe in the midst of your doubt
6. Vow praise and your love

How do we Recover Lament?

1. What does our church do well in enabling collective lament?
2. How might our church consider collectively or shared ways of lament in the future?