

**OT 453 Reading the Prophets: Communal Lament**  
**St. Barnabas Anglican Church**  
**Monday, April 24, 2023**

**Welcome and Introduction**

- Communal lament does *not* assign blame
- Communal lament is *not* about false guilt
- Communal lament **is** naming, mourning, and pouring out pain, suffering, and trauma to God who is the ultimate Source of all goodness, healing, forgiveness, transformation, and hope
- The psalms and the prophets model lament for us. These texts often include the following elements:
  - Affirmations of God’s character
  - Raw, unfiltered expressions of pain, grief, and trauma
  - Confession of sin: naming the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that lead to the suffering
  - Repentance: naming the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that lead away from the sin and towards healing and wholeness
  - Affirmations of God’s faithfulness, life-giving presence, comfort, and hope

“Lamentation names what is wrong, what is out of order in God’s world, what keeps human beings from thriving in all their creative potential. Simple acts of lament expose these conditions, name them, open them to grief and anger, and make them visible for remedy. In its complaint, anger and grief, lamentation protests conditions that prevent human thriving and this resistance may finally prepare the way for healing.”

– Kathleen M. O’Connor, *Lamentations & The Tears of the World*

**Opening Prayer**

Leader: Stand up and praise Yahweh our God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.

All (stand): Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are Yahweh. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

All (kneel): Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name. Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame, because we as the Prairie community have sinned against you.

Lord our God, you are merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against you. We have brought on ourselves pain, suffering, grief, and misery because of our rebellion. You justly discipline us. Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with your mighty hand and who even more gloriously rescues us from slavery to sin through your resurrected Son, we have sinned; we have done wrong. Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servants. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on the Prairie community. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the brokenness and pain of this temple within which your Spirit dwells.

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act!

**Song: O Lord, Hear Our Prayer (Taizé)**

O Lord, hear our prayer; O Lord, hear our prayer  
When we call, answer us!  
O Lord, hear our prayer; O Lord, hear our prayer  
Come and listen to us!

## **A Lament for Sexual Violence**

Leader: Mighty Creator, you made us in your image so that we might know deep joy that comes through harmonious relationship with you, with each other, and with creation. You created us as good, hungry creatures so that you might fulfill our deepest hungers and desires from your abundance. Wise and Just Creator, hear our lament for the trauma of sexual violence that ruptures and violates us when twisted and broken sexual appetites turn to feed on a fellow image-bearer.

All (stand): How long, LORD, must we cry out in anguish from the pain of sexual violence? How long must we go on pleading for the safety and protection of children from those who *should* be protecting them? How long will the voices of our survivors be ignored and the abusers believed? How long will our survivors of sexual violence be terrified to speak because the trauma has taken away their voice, enslaving them to unprocessed memories and triggers.

God of justice, we are angry! Our confusion overwhelms us. Our shattered selves silently scream for breath, for someone to listen to us and believe us. Where were you, God of justice, when another's sexual appetite was turned on us, violating us? God of order and harmony, we are desperate for your healing presence among us. God of safety and forgiveness, we are desperate for freedom from the sin of sexual violence committed against us.

Time for other prayers (kneel)

Leader: Compassionate Father and God of justice, your Son Jesus Christ suffered sexual violence at the hands of Roman soldiers at his Crucifixion before he willingly bore the sins of the world as he hung on the cross. May all those among us who have suffered sexual violence find comfort and healing in our Savior who suffers with us and knows this pain too.

All (kneel): God of justice and all that is good, we confess that our community participates in sexual violence through disordered and twisted sexual desires that we feed through pornography, violent and sexually-explicit videos games, movies, and other forms of

“entertainment.” We confess our brokenness that objectifies others and our selfishness that exploits others to satisfy our own disordered sexual desires. We confess the truth that our disordered desires bring only suffering and pain to ourselves and our whole community.

We repent, Father, of these sins! In your mercy, may we find forgiveness, the freedom from enslavement to these sins that our community so desperately needs! Help us to see that are sexual desires point us towards you, the One who fully satisfies. Transform our hearts and minds to see one another as image-bearers. Strengthen us to stop consuming pornography and other “entertainment” that distort and destroy. In your mercy, Father, rescue us.

### **Song (stand): Drive Out the Darkness (Porter's Gate)**

*Come, O Come  
Be our light  
Drive out the darkness  
Come, Jesus, Come*

Every year under the thorn  
Every wrong that we have known  
Every valley will be raised  
Ancient ruins will be remains

Every weapon made for war  
Every gun and every sword  
Will be melted in the flame  
To be used for gardening

In the emptiness of grief  
Through the night of suffering  
In the loss and in the tears  
God of comfort, O be near...

*Come, O Come  
Be our light  
Drive out the darkness  
Come, and end all the violence*

*Come, do not be silent  
Come, cling to your promise  
Come, break all injustice  
Come, Jesus, Come*

Leader: God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong, always present, always just: You gave your only Son to save us by his blood on the cross. Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace, join to your own suffering the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind, and spirit by those who betrayed the trust placed in them. Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters who have been gravely harmed, and the cries of those who love them. Soothe their restless hearts with hope, steady their shaken spirits with faith. Grant them justice for their cause, enlightened by your truth. Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts, heal your people's wounds and transform brokenness into wholeness. Grant us the courage and wisdom, humility and grace, to act with justice. Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors. Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.  
(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

### **A Lament for Racism**

Leader: Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – you have declared that a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language will one day stand before your throne to proclaim, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and the Lamb.” Our God, whose very being is unity of diversity, hear our lament for the racism that persists within our Prairie community.

All (stand): We lament with Dezree, Nathanael, Shana, Katalina, and other students on our campus who have experienced racist comments, jokes, and attitudes. We grieve together that racism is within our hearts and minds as a distorted and sinful response to our fellow image-bearers who don't look like us.

How long, LORD, will the dominant culture persist in willful ignorance of this reality? How long, Creator, will our brothers and sisters suffer from belittling exclusion and marginalization? How long will their prophetic voices that name injustice be ignored and silenced?

We grieve with them their pain and confusion of experiencing racism on our Christian campus. Why does the dominant culture resist and even actively ignore the truth that racist patterns of thought and behavior have formed us? When will we begin to actively listen to and believe our brothers and sisters?

God of dignity and justice, we are angry and appalled that this still happens on our campus! We are frustrated that we must still address this sin of racism! We are grieved and weary that this sin is still inflicting pain and sucking away our energy! Shake us out of our rebellious stupor and humble us to confess and repent of this sin! God of dignity and comfort, we plead for your healing, strengthening, and outpouring of abundant life on our brothers and sisters who have been hurt by racism.

Time for other prayers (kneel)

Leader: Gracious God, who created every nation, tribe, people, and language, comfort and heal all those in our community who have experienced racism, assuring them of your love and their belonging.

All (kneel): God, we confess the damage that our silence as done in the face of racism, for the sins of racism that run through our lives like so many threads in a cloth. Forgive us for the times we have given in to our discomfort, for the times we have forgotten our own privilege and failed to stand with our brothers and sisters. Help those of us who experience a position of privilege every day to remember that, with our privilege, we are imbued with the responsibility to challenge and hold one another accountable. Give us the courage to educate ourselves, to listen well, and to use our voices when it is most needed. (Clara Weybright, <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/menno-snapshots/lament-violence-of-racism/>)

Give us the grace and strength to rid ourselves of racial stereotypes that oppress some of us while providing entitlements to others. Help us to create a college community that embraces the hopes and fears of those oppressed by racism. Heal your family, God, and make us one

with you, in union with our brother Jesus, and empowered by your Holy Spirit.

(Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team, <https://oppeace.org/blog/2018/05/25/prayer-uplifting-human-dignity/>)

**Song (stand): Drive Out the Darkness** (Porter's Gate)

*Come, O Come*

*Be our light*

*Drive out the darkness*

*Come, and end all the violence*

*Come, do not be silent*

*Come, cling to your promise*

*Come, break all injustice*

*Come, Jesus, Come*

Leader: O God, who created all peoples in your image: We thank you for the diversity of races and cultures in this world. Show us your presence in those who differ from us, and enrich our lives with their fellowship, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (BCP, 2019)

**A Lament for Isolation/Mental/Emotional Health**

Leader: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, your sacred word assures us that your redemptive, saving work is for our whole selves – rational, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. You comfort childless women like Sarah, Rachel, Tamar, and Hannah, validating their emotional and relational suffering. You rescued Mary Magdalene from demons, restored sight to the blind, healed the paralyzed man, and reinstated to community the woman who bled for 12 years. Compassionate Savior, hear our lament for the pain of isolation, anxiety, depression, and all forms of mental and emotional illness and struggle.

All (stand): We lament the experiences of rejection and fear, misunderstanding and lack of belonging, that have pushed us away from others and have motivated us to pull away from others. We lament the lies we believe that we are not loved and not valuable, the

lies that say we are worthless, forgettable, and a burden to others. We lament the reality of chemical imbalances in our bodies that hinder our ability to know wholeness. We lament the side-effects of medications that help in one way but hinder us in other ways. We grieve the presence of fear and anxiety in our community that depletes our resources of mind, body, and spirit. We grieve that so many do not feel safe to trust those who can provide help.

We cry out from the depths of these experiences of darkness, struggle, confusion, and distance. God of light, are you listening? Do you see us? Resurrected Savior, where are you when the darkness grips us so that we gasp for breath, when the darkness is so strong that we can barely hold on? Creator, who made us, where is your healing help when our bodies work against us to experience and believe truth?

God of light and beauty, harmony and order, we plead for your mercy, kindness, and compassion to break into the darkness of isolation and anxiety. We plead for your sufficient grace to support those who must live with helpful medications that also have negative side-effects. We plead for your truth to conquer the lies of Satan that keep us trapped in fear and isolation. God of mercy, hear our plea for your light to shine in this darkness.

Time for other prayers (kneel)

Leader: Holy Spirit, Breath of Life, Comforter, the One who enlightens hearts and minds, the One who intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words, breath into us your peace and light.

All (kneel): We confess that we have contributed to others' experiences of rejection and lack of belonging through words we have spoken or words we have *not* spoken. We confess that are often too self-absorbed to notice others, too fearful ourselves to reach out courageously to others, too busy to take time to see and listen. We confess the sin of hyper-individualism and the lies we believe that assert that we do not need others, that we can do it by ourselves, that our isolation protects us from being vulnerable. We confess that our hyper-individualism fuels pride, making us unwilling to ask for help

for fear of being seen as a needy burden. We confess that our pride is self-destructive and destructive to our community. We confess that we idolize ourselves and therefore often contribute to our own pain and suffering.

We repent of the sins of hyper-individualism, self-idolization, and selfishness that push us away from each other, fueling fear and distrust of one another. We embrace the truth that you created us to need you and one another, that you created us for community. We embrace the truth that we are all members of your Body and that each member is essential so that the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you." We plead for courage to reach out to others in our time of need and for courage to reach out to those who have a need. God of light and life, dispel the darkness of isolation, anxiety, depression, and mental and emotional illness, bringing grace and strength and healing.

**Song (stand): Drive Out the Darkness** (Porter's Gate)

*Come, O Come  
Be our light  
Drive out the darkness  
Come, Jesus, Come*

In the emptiness of grief  
Through the night of suffering  
In the loss and in the tears  
God of comfort, O be near...

*Come, O Come  
Be our light  
Drive out the darkness  
Come, and end all the violence  
Come, do not be silent  
Come, cling to your promise  
Come, break all injustice  
Come, Jesus, Come*

Leader: Almighty God, whose Son took upon himself the afflictions of your people: Regard with your tender compassion those among us suffering from anxiety, depression, isolation, or mental-emotional illness; bear our sorrows and our cares; supply all our needs; help us to put our whole trust and confidence in you; and restore us to strength of mind and joyfulness of spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (BCP, 2019)

All (stand): Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: we hold up all our weakness to your strength, our failure to your faithfulness, our sinfulness to your perfection, our loneliness to your compassion, our pains to your great agony on the Cross. We pray that you will cleanse us, strengthen us, guide us, so that in all ways our lives may be lived as you have them lived, without cowardice and for you alone. Show us how to live in true humility, true contrition, and true love. Amen (BCP, 2019)

**Song (stand): We Will Feast** (Sandra McCracken)

*We will feast in the house of Zion  
We will sing with our hearts restored  
He has done great things, we will say together  
We will feast and weep no more*

We will not be burned by the fire  
He is the Lord, our God  
We are not consumed by the flood  
Upheld, protected, gathered up

In the dark of night, before the dawn  
My soul, be not afraid  
For the promised morning, oh how long?  
Oh God of Jacob, be my strength

Every vow we've broken and betrayed  
You are the faithful One  
And from the garden to the grave  
Bind us together, bring shalom