

Prayer Service of Lament

7pm Sunday June 28

WEPC Sanctuary

*"Weep with those who weep.
Live in harmony with one another." Romans 12:15-16*

Lament stands in the gap between pain and promise. Here at West End Presbyterian Church, we are learning more about what it means to cry out to the Lord together. To weep with those who weep. And to trust that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Man of Sorrows, well acquainted with our grief.

God has given prayer a means of grace whereby His hand moves and we are changed. When we lament, we gather together to seek His justice, mercy, forgiveness, wisdom, and healing.

We lament the losses suffered in the strange isolation and disorientation of this pandemic. But that is not all. The tragic, senseless deaths of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd, and the resulting protests surging through our country, have left us wrestling with the racial brokenness present throughout our history and still present in our communities. We must pray for racial justice.

Lament is what God's Church has always done when faced with the suffering of the world. Standing in the gap between pain and promise for all the vulnerable, fearful, isolated, hungry, poor, destitute, sick, suffering, and dying.

We invite you to join us as we cry out to God. Jesus hears and answers prayer.

THE GOSPEL & RACE

Thursday, July 16, 7-9 PM

WEPC Sanctuary + Livestream

A talk by Pastor Stan Morton, pastor of Crown & Joy Presbyterian Church. The Gospel has the power to bring people together who are unlike each other, be it gender, class, culture, or race. How can we take part in releasing this power into a racially and culturally divided world? What is a Biblical vision for cross-cultural living and diverse ministry?

- What is Racial Reconciliation?
 - Should the Church Engage in Racial Reconciliation?
 - Do Churches Need to Adopt a Multi-Ethnic Mission?
 - What I Wish White People in the Church Could See.
 - What are Next Steps for the Church?
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In His book, [Dark Clouds Deep Mercy](#), Pastor Mark Vroegop writes, "Most biblical laments follow a pattern as God takes grieving people on a journey...*turn, complain, ask, and trust*" (p.29). **This four-part path to hope serves as our guide for tonight's prayer service.**

TURN TO GOD

Lament talks to God about pain. We lament personal pain, and the pain we see in the world around us. In confusion, exhaustion, and disappointment we are tempted to retreat from the One who knows our sorrows. The poison of bitterness or anger sets in, resulting in hard cynicism, unbelief, and self-justification for our sin. Silence is easier, but it turns us inward on ourselves. Ranting to others makes us feel divine for a moment, but blinds us to our Heavenly Father. Lament talks to Jesus when it is messy. He must give us faith. Turn to the Lord. He knows our every need. He hears our prayers.

COMPLAIN

Lament takes a hard look at what is wrong and speaks to God. We complain that this world is broken. We complain that we are broken. How did we get here? How does all of this fit with a sovereign God and His purposes? It appears that evil, lawlessness, or injustice rules the day. Instead of managing our struggles and stuffing our questions, lament gives voice to the tension, the gap, the "not yet" that marks all of life. Biblical complaining is not venting your wrath. It is coming before your Heavenly Father, honestly telling Him about sin, loss, struggle, and pain. Set your troubles before Jesus. Acknowledge the presence of sin in our world, the pain of its brokenness, and its devastating effects.

ASK

Lament seeks more than relief; it yearns for the deliverance that God has promised. We grow impatient and wonder if Jesus answers prayer, yet faithful lament hears what God has spoken in His Word and asks again for the Lord to hear and act. We ask shamelessly. The Spirit strengthens the Church. Boldly ask for God to keep His promises. Present your requests to Him, ask Him for help, wisdom, power, forgiveness and understanding. Pray for the light of Jesus Christ to shine forth in the midst of darkness. Ask God to do justice and to give you a heart like His.

TRUST

Confidence in God is the destination of all lament. Turning, complaining, and asking lead here. Lament helps us through suffering by directing our hearts to trust God's purposes hidden behind the pain. In this way, a lament is one of the most basic practices of the Christian life. Lament leads us through our sorrows so that we can trust God and praise Him. Trust Christ, praising Him for His righteousness and justice in all things.

TURN TO GOD

Pastor Steve Shelby

Almighty God,
You have gathered us together tonight as Your people.

Hebrew 4:16

**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.**

We need Your mercy and grace.
For ourselves, for one other, for our city, and for our nation.
We have been overwhelmed,
full of sorrow, anger, and confusion.

Romans 8:26-27

**The Spirit helps us in our weakness.
For we do not know what to pray for as we ought,
the Spirit Himself intercedes for us
with groanings too deep for words.
And He who searches hearts
knows what is the mind of the Spirit,
because the Spirit intercedes for the saints
according to the will of God.**

We rely upon Your Holy Spirit to pray for us
and to teach us to pray.
Heavenly Father, we humbly turn to You,
bring our complaints,
and ask You to hear our prayer,
comfort Your people,
and strengthen us to trust and follow
our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Psalm 126

"Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy" Psalm 126:5

**Our mouths they were filled, filled with laughter;
Our tongues they were loosed, loosed with joy.
Restore us, O Lord! Restore us, O Lord!...**

**Although we are weeping, Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
for the day You will reap them!
Your sheaves we will carry; Lord, please do not tarry!
All those who sow weeping will go out with songs of joy!**

**The nations will say, "He has done great things!"
The nations will sing songs of joy.
Restore us, O Lord! Restore us, O Lord!...**

Isaac Wardell, ©2013 Bifrost Arts. Used by permission. CCLI 708363.

COMPLAIN and ASK

Erin Bouknight

Psalm 13

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

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.

How Long, O Lord?

Psalm 13

**How long, O Lord, shall I complain
like one that seeks his God in vain?
Canst Thou Thy face forever hide,
and I still pray and be denied?...**

***But I have trusted in Thy grace,
and shall again behold Thy face,
behold Thy face (2x)***

**Shall I forever be forgot,
as one whom thou regardest not?
Still shall my soul Thy absence mourn,
and still despair of Thy return?...**

**How long shall my poor troubled breast
be with these anxious thoughts oppressed?
And Satan, my malicious foe,
rejoice to see me sunk so low?...**

Isaac Watts (1719); Tune: ©2008 Karl Digerness Music. Used by permission. CCLI 708363.

Corporate Lament

Elder & Youth Director Tim Cornwell

Our great God, we lament the loss and degradation of life in
this season of pandemic. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament the loss of good and gainful work and the
mounting financial pressures in our community. **Lord, hear
our prayer.**

We lament struggling and failing businesses, non-profits, churches, and families. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament the disruption and powerlessness of our lives. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament with the widowed, the orphaned, the sick, the wounded, and the suffering. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament with all homes that are broken or torn by strife. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament human lawlessness and proud vengeance. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament lives that have known disappointment and sorrow. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament hearts that have known confusion and condemnation. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament with the weary, the rejected, the lonely, and the fearful. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament with those that have lost, in death, the ones they love. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament with the poor and the oppressed, for the unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament with all who face danger, persecution, violence, oppression, and degradation. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Silence

Corporate Confession of Sin

Pastor Joe Brown

Psalm 139:23-24

**Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.**

We lament the ways we have injured or offended our neighbor. **Lord, have mercy.**

We lament that we have often failed to condemn discrimination that leads to unrest. **Lord, have mercy.**

We lament the ways we have grown accustomed to violence and practiced injustice for personal gain. **Lord, have mercy.**

We lament the ways our nation's history is marred by enslavement and oppression, and the ways racism has deformed our lives today. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We lament with our black and brown brothers and sisters who have known racial tension, violence, conflict, and discrimination. **Lord, have mercy.**

We lament our proud self-interest and the drive to exalt ourselves. **Lord, have mercy.**

We lament the ways that division among God's people rend the body of Christ and grieve His Spirit. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have not been generous with Your good blessings, and sought our own comfort to the harm of others. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have preferred order over justice, and we have been slow to make peace. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have been fearful and distrustful of those who are different from us. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have held others in contempt, and have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have not loved You with our whole heart, and so transgressed Your Law. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lamentations 3:20-24

**Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
the wormwood and the gall!
My soul continually remembers 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."**

Silence

Words of Encouragement

II Thessalonians 2:16-17

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

Help My Unbelief

"I believe; help my unbelief" Mark 9:24

I know the Lord is nigh,
And would but cannot pray,
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away.
And frights my soul away.

I would but can't repent,
Though I endeavor oft;
This stony heart can ne'er relent
'Til Jesus makes it soft.
'Til Jesus make it soft...

*Help my unbelief.
Help my unbelief.
Help my unbelief.
My help must come from Thee.*

I would but cannot love,
Though wooed by love divine;
No arguments have power to move
A soul as base as mine.
A soul so base as mine.

I would but cannot rest,
In God's most holy will;
I know what He appoints is best,
And murmur at it still.
I murmur at it still...

John Newton (1779); Tune: ©2006 Red Mountain Music. Used by permission. CCLI 708363.

TRUST

Elder & Director of Neighborhood Outreach, Changjwok Deng

Story of Lament

Psalm 77:1-15,19-20

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and He will hear me.

In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;

In the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;

My soul refuses to be comforted.

When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints.

You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

I consider the days of old, the years long ago.

I said, "Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart."

Then my spirit made a diligent search: "Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?"

Has His steadfast love forever ceased? Are His promises at an end for all time?

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His compassion?"

Then I said, "I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High."

I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember Your wonders of old.

I will ponder all Your work, and meditate on Your mighty deeds.

Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?

You are the God who works wonders; You have made known Your might among the peoples.

You with Your arm redeemed Your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.

Your way was through the sea, Your path through the great waters; yet Your footprints were unseen.

You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Doxology

"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD." Psalm 150:6

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.**

Thomas Ken (1709); Tune: OLD HUNDRETH, Louis Bourgeois (1551). Public domain.

Benediction
