

Lament

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[0:00] Special time of being able to worship him, despite circumstances, ascribing worth to him. And would we be people who give him the ultimate worth?

And that was the kind of thing that I shared. And then we had this time where we were able to practice that. And of course, that was a joyful kind of worship. And I mentioned how Africans always have this gift in leading us in joyful worship.

There's just something that the rest of us cultures are still lacking far behind and we're trying to figure out. But this week, as I was wrestling with what I wanted to talk about, something really hit on my kind of heart.

Well, something that is the opposite of joy. And one of the disciplines I want to talk about today is actually the one of lamenting. And we're going to swing right on the way, all the way to the other side.

Last week, I said, if we're to worship, we first have to reflect. We have to remember who God is, remind ourselves who God is, and then we have to respond to him. And that's where our worship comes from. God, whatever I'm going through, I now choose to think about you and who you are and what you've done.

[1:01] And because of that, I worship you. And I said, to rejoice is a choice. You have to choose to rejoice. When things aren't going well, you have to choose to rejoice. And today, I'm going to tell you, actually, the journey to joy is a long journey.

It's a painful journey. Often, that journey to joy starts with desolation, starts with distress, starts with sorrow. And it's through that, if we are able to move through that, then we end up with joy.

And so we're talking about the spiritual discipline of prayer, but maybe more specifically, the prayer of tears is what Richard Foster would call it. The prayer of tears where we actually go to God to grieve to lament.

And that's why it's a hard topic for a lot of us, because actually, as a society, I don't know how well we grieve. I don't know how well we grieve at all.

Recently, I had a colleague who, in my eyes, had the most horrific thing happen to his family, losing a baby. And I was just like, that grief.

[2:05] I don't even know how to process it. I don't even know how to talk to you about it. And we were talking because, you know, I was reflecting. Actually, I've spent over half my life now without my dad.

My dad died suddenly. Actually, I lost all my grandparents during my teen years. And so I'm acquainted with grief. And I was sharing with him, actually, often, I think I only trust people, really trust people who are acquainted with grief, who have truly been through it, who know the loss.

And I was telling him, this pain that you're feeling right now, I can imagine, is the sharpest kind of pain that is just searing. You can literally physically feel it. But the grief also never goes away.

I was having another prayer with someone else the other day, and I was actually reflecting.

Actually, I'm still grieving. 22 years on, after losing my dad, I'm still grieving, but the grief has changed. The grief has changed the way I was reflecting.

The thing that I grieve about right now in this season is that I don't get to crack open a beer and talk to my dad as a fellow adult. To be able to just have a conversation.

[3:10] He knew me as a spotty, annoying teenager. And that was all it was. Most of his conversations revolved around me hiding from him and him trying to tell me that he knows.

But that he still loves me. I haven't been able to sit down with him now and go, that's what I'm going through with my children. That's what I'm going through with the circumstances I have.

And I watch people, many of us, who still have the blessing to be able to speak to a father and to have a dad as an adult friend. That's a gift. And I was like, oh, I think I'm, that's what I'm grieving now.

It never truly ends. Because the point is, do we know how to grieve? So I know we're, maybe you're getting a bit of whiplash here because we start, last week we were talking about joyful worship. And this week we're talking about grieving.

But my question to you is, do you know how to grieve? And I think it is a discipline. I think it is a discipline of, the discipline of lamenting. If you categorize the different Psalms, and there's different ways to do it.

[4:09] But if you loosely categorize all the different types of Psalms, the one that is overwhelmingly the most is lamenting. Over 40% of the Psalms would be classed as lamenting.

Which means you're just grieving, you're just going out and just telling, you're just venting to God. It's interesting, if you look at, I told you about the worship song charts that we have these days. They did look, actually under 10% of the songs are now about lamenting.

So somewhere along the way, we've lost the art of grieving. Actually, even, I'm struggling to kind of get my thoughts together this morning. Because I was like, actually, even in that space where the team were leading us, and me here were talking about this.

This whole week we've been wrestling with this topic. And then Rebecca, we just said, actually there's something here. I think there are people here. I'm not even going to ask you to put your hand up because I know there are people here who are grieving.

I know there are people here who need that space to lament. There are people in this community, key members in this community, who we can't even share about yet, who are hurting.

[5:13] And it would be wrong for me to say, hey, be joyful. Put a smile on your face. Trade your sorrows and clap and dance. But I tell you, to get to that joy, you must go through the tunnel of sorrow.

And that's what I'm going to be hopefully trying to share about. And thankfully, I'm not going to be the only one who shares about it. Because I think we all have different ways to grieve. Sadly, as a society, the way that we grieve the most now is just by putting something on to watch it.

Watch Netflix. That's how we grieve. We get ourselves addicted to other things so we can be distracted by other things. So we don't need to think about the things that are actually giving us pain. Or we just go onto Instagram and we just scroll and scroll.

And hope it helps us feel better. And then each time get surprised that our soul just sinks further and further and further. And we realize, actually, this session of doom scrolling that has lasted anywhere between two minutes and two hours has not helped me.

And so we don't have the tools to grieve. There are actually other societies for these many, many years who actually have these kind of grieving ceremonies. Actually, when a kid goes into adulthood, there's a ceremony to celebrate them heading into adulthood.

[6:22] But it's also grieving the childhood that they're leaving behind. We don't do any of those things. We don't initiate our children. We don't bring them into adulthood. And we don't grieve. We don't teach them how to grieve. Because mostly we ourselves don't know how to grieve.

And you can tell that by the rising cases of depression, the rising cases of suicide. We don't know how to lament and grieve. Yet you see in the book of Psalms, they're just grieving everywhere. They're just lamenting everywhere. So I'm praying. I'm praying that today we have a space to try that. And I'm praying that it's a safe space for us to try that.

I was asking Christine, I was like, how do you think we should do this? And she was like, I don't know. This could go anywhere. And I was like, let's just step cautiously, humbly, and openly into this space.

And even as I'm speaking to you now, I see there are those of you who resonate with that, who are grieving, who are lamenting. In scripture, I find it comforting that you see grief everywhere.

[7:26] Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, my wife's favorite prophet, was famous for grieving. He wrote the book of Lamentations. Habakkuk, the prophet, is constantly grieving. Jesus himself said, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

You see, he loses his friend Lazarus, and I'll talk a little bit more about that later. And he grieves. He sits on a mountain and looks at the city of Jerusalem. And what does he do? Weeps.

Our Lord knew how to grieve. Our Lord knew how to lament. The question for us is, do we? The Psalms talk about this. Psalm 22. Jesus quotes it. He says, why?

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Psalm 42 is, as the deer pants for, water, so my soul yearns for you. My tears have been my food day and night.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Psalm 130 says, out of the depths of my soul, I cry out to you. And probably the most famous of them all, and actually one of the shortest of them all, is Psalm 13. [8:32] And that's the one we're going to be going through today. You'll be pleased to know as I go through it, verse by verse, that there is only six verses. Because I want us to be able to have some space to be able to at least respond to this ourselves.

So at this point, I'm going to ask Josh to actually read Psalm 13. And can I invite us to stand for the word of God? So we're going to go through Psalm 13.

We're reading out of the ESV translation. If you're following Psalm 13. How long, O Lord, to the choir master of Psalm of David. 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.

[9:30] 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. This is the word of the Lord.

Praise be to God. Thank you, Josh. Please take a seat. I told you I was writing a Psalm a day for 50 days and that one jumped out at me. Six verses so I had enough brain power to process it.

He starts off by saying, how long, how long, O Lord, will you forget about me? And verse six, five verses later, he goes, and you have dealt bountifully with me. I was like, how did we get there? Within six verses, you went from God, you have forgotten me.

You don't care. And six verses later, he's like, God, you have been so good to me. You have given me everything I need. How do we get there? I think he's just taken the journey. Now, he's written it as a Psalm.

But of course, you better know that this is a journey that he's taken. It isn't just the five minutes that he's taken to write. He's gotten there. This is a long journey. And so I pray that as we absorb this, as we listen to this, let's not rush our own grief process.

[10:29] Let's not rush how we get from desolation to joy. Let us take the journey that's necessary to get there. And hopefully, we'll be able to follow what he says here. Just a couple of quotes, just to start us off. Richard Foster, as I quoted him, says this, Lament is the bridge between despair and hope.

It is the honest cry of a heart that refuses to give up on God, even when life is hard and God seems silent. Eugene Peterson says this, Lament is the honest cry of a hurting heart that refuses to let go of God.

Yancey says, lament is the language of the soul in pain. We talked about worship last week. Keller actually said lament is a form of worship. How many of you spoke to God just like that Psalm 13 recently?

Where you go, God, I'm so fed up with you hiding from me. I'm so fed up that you're not answering me. I'm so fed up that you're not coming through for me in this scenario. Quite frankly, maybe not many of us do, especially in an Asian culture.

We just don't talk to our fathers like that. And so we stay silent. And so it goes deeper and deeper and deeper.

[11:40] Let us learn to lament today. He says, it's interesting. He says, how long? Four times. In the space of two verses, he says, how long? How long? How long? How long?

A couple of weeks ago, Gabe led us to talk about the word of God and actually how you can use the word of God to basically help you fight these battles. And so we can try it here. When he says, how long, oh Lord, will you forget me?

He's saying, God, you don't care. You've forgotten about me. You've forgotten that you've left me in this ditch. You don't care. But if you use the word of God, you go, actually, that is not true.

You look at 1 Peter 4, he says, cast your anxieties onto me. Why? Because I care for you. So remind yourself in that moment where you're like, God, you don't even care about me. How long will you forget? You're so absent-minded.

God's saying, I do care about you. And then he goes further. He says, actually, it's not that you don't care and you've forgotten about me. He says, how long will you hide your face from me? [12 : 35] So this is a deliberate withholding of help. God, you know I need you. And yet somehow you're hiding behind the curtain and you won't even come out. You won't even let me see.

You won't even let me feel the joy that comes from being in your presence. That's honestly probably my biggest gripe with God. Because I hear people, him speaking to people left, right, and center and people feeling his presence.

And I'm just sat there going, well, God, why aren't you showing up with me? Which is why one of my favorite Disney songs of all time is from Frozen 2. And it's Show Yourself.

Honestly, when I, I mean, of course, I know it's not the Bible, guys. Calm down. There's that scene when, okay, you're going to judge me. Now, that scene when Elsa is riding on the horse and then the piano starts.

Do you know, can you put your hand up if you know what I'm talking about? Just so I'm not alone. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, ladies. Clearly, it's just the ladies. And she's riding on the horse and heading towards this, this abyss, this place.

[13 : 40] And the song, Show Yourself, starts. I still get goosebumps as I listen to it because I'm like, that's how it's going to be when I walk into eternity's gates. I'm going to be like, I have not seen you the whole of my life and I'm finally ready to see you.

You're finally going to reveal yourself to me. You're going to show yourself to me and it's all going to make sense. Because if I'm honest, it doesn't make sense. Most of the time, it does not make sense in this world. And I ask that question, God, how long will you forget me?

How long will you hide your face from me? And yet Psalm 34 says, the Lord is close to the brokenhearted. And I don't understand that.

I don't process that because my heart is broken, but I don't feel close to you. The psalmist at this point would say, I don't feel close to you. Whereas I would sit down and just get, well, maybe it's because it's me.

Maybe because I am not worthy of being in your presence. Do we lament? And then he says, how long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

[14 : 40] We know what this is. If you've stayed in bed and you've just stirred and you're not able to sleep, you are just trapped in your own thoughts. That's what he's saying. How long will you leave me here? I have no answers. My mind is running around in circles. I can't get anywhere.

And you need to pull me out. But you're leaving me here. How long? How long? And then he says, finally, how long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

He's saying, this grief I'm going through, this pain I'm going through, this trial I'm going through, when will it end? When will it end? Because when we're grieving, if you've ever grieved before, one of the big feelings is, I don't know if this will ever end.

I think I'm going to be stuck here forever. And even the song that says everything will be all right at the end doesn't help you. But the truth is, of course, it isn't the end.

That Jesus says that he is the alpha and omega. He is the beginning and the end. In Revelation, he says he will have the final word. So when we are going through trauma, when we are going through grief and we're walking through the valley of the shadow of death, we can say, well, everything will be all right at the end.

[15 : 47] And if it isn't all right, it's because it's not the end. But still, we should still be in a place where we can tell God that. I'm just so fed up that this is so long.

This is taking way longer than I want it to. Do we have that confidence to approach him in that kind of way? Recognizing that he is the one that will have the final say.

I want to pause here for a second. I'm actually going to invite Queenie, my friend, up to come and share with me. Because actually, I realize when it comes to this, there are just so many approaches to the issue of grief and lament.

Come on, Queenie. Shall we give her a round of applause just to encourage her? We're going to treat that as a conversation because both of us have been busy this week and we haven't had a chance to even talk a little bit about this.

But I wanted to bring her up because I know this has been the journey for her. And one of the most brightest minds. I mean, she's a sheep, but she's not stupid.

[16:46] There are others who are more so than that. But I know that this has been a journey that she's been on as well. And I want her to be able to share with you a little bit of what she's kind of gone through on this process of lamenting.

Queenie, why don't you start off in telling us, because I know it's still quite fresh. Can you tell us why you even started on this journey in looking into this topic? Sure. So at the beginning of last year, I lost a very close friend to suicide.

And so I found myself in not a great place. On the encouragement of some friends, I started going to counseling. And my counselor said, you should think about this thing called lamenting.

And around that time, another very good friend of mine who also knew what I was going through suggested this book to me called *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*. And so I read that book and that really was the beginning of it all.

And tell us a little bit, as you went on this journey, you got the counseling, the reading, the praying. What were some of the themes that were really jumping up at you that maybe you didn't really know beforehand?

[17:53] I would say that one can't actually immediately get to the end of Psalm 13 that we were looking at just now.

One can't just suddenly get there. I continued to come to church and we would sing these worship songs. And songs like *It Is Well*, I couldn't sing it.

I was like, it's not well. And so I found that I couldn't get to that place. And actually, I guess the book had a lot of practical suggestions, which was very helpful.

It talked about how there are four steps to lamenting. The first step being actually just turning to God. Because actually this author, and actually what I'm saying today is basically all from this book. So the author says, to cry is human, but to lament is Christian. And so I think that's a distinguishing feature between being just a human and really being Christian.

[18:56] And that first step is turning to God and not walking away. Because it's very easy, I think, when things go badly to kind of want to walk away. And then the next step is to be able to go to God and complain.

And so I learned about how actually it's not unbiblical to go to God and complain. I mean, one might think, okay, we should all be holy and praise God and all that. But there are moments when that really doesn't work.

But then the book also very helpfully reminded me that I can't stay in that place of complaining. And so that really takes us to the third step.

And the third step is to ask God boldly. So it's really going from the why did this all happen, and I don't get why this all happened, to trying to look more and think about God's character.

And to ask him for his help and ask him to restore. And actually, the way that the Psalms do it, I think, sometimes is suddenly there will be these complaints, etc.

[20:01] And then suddenly there will be a word, yet something, something. So yet God is holy. I think that's from Psalm 22. And so that helps turn one to look at his character. And that helps one kind of focus on him a bit more rather than just the why.

And then the final step is the step we were looking at just now at the very end of that Psalm. And actually, that was the example that the book gave as well. So the fourth step is trusting God and turning to him to trust in him.

And like you were saying, it says yet. Sorry, this one was but. I'm so sorry. It says but his love is steadfast. And that really is that declaration of trust.

So I think I learned that basically one can't really get from that bad place to that place of I, yay, you know, trust God. And there is this process and it does take time.

I'm thinking about that quote, to cry is human and to lament is Christian. I'm thinking what that means. And what does it mean for you? And how has that changed your way of processing grief and sadness?

[21:05] Has it changed at all? What's the distinction between the two? I think if one just cries, one is very easy to just stay there. And I would say from a faith perspective, when something like this happens, it's actually also very easy for me to just fall off a cliff and have a sort of massive faith crisis and just sort of stop there, I guess.

But I think. But I think the journey of lamenting is what has enabled me to not lose my faith, I guess, and to stay with God.

And actually, I actually don't know how anybody who's not a Christian can deal with grief, actually, because all this has just been so integral to my journey out of that sort of massive darkness. Yeah, because I remember maybe even as a 17-year-old, after I lost dad, I was like, actually, I haven't really cried much before, but now I'm just going to go all out. And, you know, if anyone has lost a loved one before, you'll probably have been there where you dig up all the things that remind you of them, and then you just stay there for hours.

And you just keep going. And you just let it all out. And you just dig deep. But as I grow old, I'm like, okay, what would that mean? How would I do that with God? And I think about, let's say, Alicia, she falls over and she cries because she scrapes her knee.

[22:20] It's one thing just sitting her by herself and just kind of crying, weeping because it hurts. And there's a whole other thing as a father, which is like, I wish that she would just come to me and let me hold her and hug her while she does essentially the same thing, right?

And maybe there's two images there. And so tell us how you lament. I mean, what does that look like for you? Because no doubt there's always things to lament, right? And so how do you do it? Give us some ideas and inspiration. So I journal a lot. So I read a lot and I journal a lot. So one of the books I've shared with, I have a whole bunch of other books. So if anyone wants recommendations, feel free to let me know.

And I find journaling helps me because it helps me go a little bit slower when I write things down. Because I tend to be a very sort of impatient sort of person. I sort of charge around and do lots of things. But writing it down will slow me down.

And sometimes I find it helpful to read back what I've written before to help me process it again. Put your hand up if you journal.

[23:19] Is that something that you do? Journaling is super important. I think those of you who journal will kind of say yes because it slows you down completely. When he says, how long once I take counsel in my own soul, you're kind of just swirling and you just fly through things and you take shortcuts in your mind.

Your synapses all merge together because you're just thinking about the same thing over and over again. When you journal, you force yourself to stop and go, okay, let me just put down what's on my mind. And I agree.

When you look back at some of the journals that you had in the previous years, you're like, oh, God. That's when the goodness of God starts to creep in because you're like, oh, God has been good. I was lamenting about that.

But look where I am now. You know, and that's probably a big thing. And actually, when I was talking to my colleague who suffered this grief, he said, oh, I hate worship. Right. Do you feel like, especially when the Christians, they sing that goodness of God song and then you've got those people closing their eyes and smiling and singing and you're like, God is not good.

I can't sing this song. Right. And there's that place. Share with us one final thing that you've been kind of mulling over and just personally in how you're replying. Just the principle of lamenting in your life.

[24:27] A bit like what you were saying earlier on. It is not a sort of one off thing. It's not a fast thing. I mean, actually, my counselor had said that to me before, but I never quite sort of believed her.

I mean, after I spent some months lamenting and sort of trying to move out of that very difficult place, I felt I was in a better place and I probably was. But then there were some triggers and then I found myself really struggling again a few months ago.

And then so I was sitting around in this terrible place and thinking, what shall I do? And then I thought, OK, I better go and try and do all those things I was doing before the first time around. So I reread this book. I journaled more, did all sorts of things. And that did help a lot. And I think that's really shown me that it's really not a once and for all thing.

And actually, just whilst I was reading the reading the book again to prepare for today, I realized that the author also wrote that actually one has to just keep doing it, keep doing it. And I kind of had this revelation that actually the Psalms, a lot of them were written by David.

[25:33] And actually, there's no indication that he was writing about a different subject matter each time. So I can't preclude the possibility that he was actually sometimes having to lament also about the same circumstance or situation.

So I think it helped me to feel that maybe it's not unbiblical to keep doing that. And I think practically, realistically, it's just got to be done. Thank you. Sorry, I said final, but I lied. One final final. For someone who sat here who actually is struggling with this, like, I've never done it. I don't want to, but I know I need to. What's one tip that you would give them? I would actually really say read this book, to be honest. Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy. I have a PDF of it if anybody wants it. But, I mean, for me, it's quite hard to just look at a sea of Psalms and go, OK, so they're lamenting.

So let me do it. But I found the sort of step-by-step guidance in the book quite helpful. Yeah, OK. Well, thank you. Thank you, Phoebe. Can we give her a round of applause? I think I shared this confession to someone this week.

[26 : 38] I said, actually, the Psalms are not my favorite book. Because sometimes you just read over it, and it just kind of just flies over. And I'm just like, I'm not engaging. It takes me a long time. But what helps me is when I remember these Psalms were actually to do with real life.

David had a whole ton of stuff happen. He had lost his baby son. He was chased down by an adult son trying to kill him. He was just constantly being chased down, actually. So there was plenty of moments and opportunities for grief.

As do you. As do I. During COVID, I think my brother was saying this. Actually, we all really struggle with the idea of, actually, have we processed the grief of COVID? Have we processed the grief of these last few years?

And actually, there are people who are near and dear to our hearts where those few years were just so isolating that we just haven't fully bounced back from it. And that we're still anxious whenever we walk into a social setting.

That we are still prone to get triggered very quickly to go back into those spaces. And something that I learned during those times is actually it's just mixed. You know, I asked you how your week was.

[27 : 35] And you say, it was mixed. There were good things and there were bad things. And that is just the nature of the Christian journey or just any life, for that matter, where you hold gratitude and grief hand in hand.

And so we can worship and make a joyful noise, as we said last week. But we can also still grieve and lament. And we can do both things together within the short time and space of even six verses. We're able to bring all of those things to God in one beautiful mess and say, God, I am grateful for you.

But I am also grieving and annoyed at you. All these things can be true. He says, how long? How long? How long? There's a time element to this, which is like, God, we want you to act and we want you to act now.

It's kind of like kids who are saying, are we there yet? Are we at the place that you told us we would be going? And what it really is, is just a sense of trust.

God, have you done what you needed to do yet? Have I learned what I needed to learn? And am I going through this in a place that I'm actually walking through? That's why journaling is important, because you can't rush through journaling unless you type really, really fast and you're journaling on your iPad.

[28 : 39] But the art of writing, processing slowly is so important when it comes to the issue of lamenting. N.T. Wright says this. Actually, lamenting is what happens when people ask God why and he doesn't answer them.

How many times have you asked God for something and he said, well, nothing. You'd almost want him to even say no. But he just doesn't say anything. And that is the lamenting.

How long? How long? I take comfort in the fact, as I'm going through that and I'm going through all those emotions, that Jesus himself went through those emotions. I said a few months back, John 11 has constantly just been coming back up on my mind.

And it's been showing me a different side to Jesus. And of course, the very famous verse, which is Jesus wept, is there. But the circumstances surrounding it were really interesting because he loses his friend Lazarus.

He walks into town and then Mary and Martha go, oh, if only you were here. And then he goes, don't worry, he'll be back. Well, he doesn't say it in that voice or those words.

[29 : 46] But then he says, he'll be back. I'm going to raise him again. And so, and then he keeps walking. And then when he sees everyone crying, he weeps. And I'm like, that is so interesting.

If I'm about to perform the greatest miracle that these people will ever witness until I die and rise again, again myself, I don't know if weeping was the first thing that I would do. Because I'll be like, hey, it's okay, Kyle.

I know you're worried about that exam. But don't worry. You're going to pass the exam. But he weeps. Have you ever wondered that? Why does he weep when he's just about to perform the miracle that will bring him back to life again?

I think he's grieving. And he's not just grieving the loss of Lazarus. I think he's grieving because he's saying, this is not how it should have been.

This is not how we created earth to be. This is not how we created life to be. These people are walking around and they're holding this hurt. And this was never supposed to be part of the equation.

[30 : 50] And it's interesting. He says, he weeps and he grieves. And then he keeps going. He says, don't worry. I'm going to bring him back to life. And then he walks further. And then this passage says in John 11, and then he was moved deeply again.

And I'm just like, Jesus knows how it feels to go through grief. Even though he's the one who's going to turn it into sorrow, into joy, he still embraces that sorrow.

And of course, to the point of death. He's in the garden of Gethsemane at the end. And he's like, I am filled with sorrow to the point where I'm not sure I'm going to make it to the cross. He says, I'm filled with sorrow to the point of death.

I might die here and not even be able to make it to the cross and save mankind. That's the kind of grief that he had. So it brings me comfort when I have that grief.

And see, interesting, we're going to pivot now because he moves from verse 1 and 2 to verse 3.

And he says, consider and answer me, O Lord, my God. Light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Lest my enemies say I have prevailed over him.

[31 : 48] Lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. That structure that this psalm is showing us when it comes to lamenting is this. It starts with a cry and a complaint. You cry to God and say, God, why are you gone?

Why are you distant? Why are you absent? And then it's a complaint. If you don't come back, this is going to happen to me. But then afterwards, after the cry and the complaint, he then moves into the request. And this is the journey that we can be on.

So as you listen to me speak, ask yourself, actually, on my process of grief, where am I? Am I still in the crying and complaining stage? In which case, let me go all out and just give you an earful, God, because I have so much to cry about, so much to complain about.

And then after that, we can come with the request and say, God, can you hear me? Can you respond to me? Can you save me from the thing that I'm going through?

And actually, I was talking to another friend about this. If you're like me, then you'll have had lots of unanswered prayers. The problem with that is that your heart starts to get resentful.

[32 : 46] It starts to get bitter. And I was talking to a friend recently about this who was wanting to pray for, actually, for his injury to heal so he can continue with his life.

And then we unpacked it to the point where he's like, you know what, but I can't even ask anymore.

Because actually, God's never answered me for that prayer. And he said, I realize it's because I have some resentment in my heart. And I was like, oh, that's me.

Actually, I've given up asking because he's never answered. And the problem is that resentment just builds up. And he gets to the point where you don't want to cry anymore. You don't want to complain anymore.

You don't want to make any more requests anymore. Because you're just like, you've believed the lie, the fallacy that God is absent. God is distant. God doesn't care. He's forgotten. He's hiding his face from you. But we must.

He says, consider me, remember me, answer me, oh, Lord, my God. Not distant, far off God. Not far off genie. This is God, my God.

[33 : 47] And this is where I will never, ever want to stop fielding requests from my children. Whatever they ask. If it's McDonald's every day. If it's bubble tea every day.

Look, you're not going to get it. But I want you to be there with me. I want you to know that I have the connection with you, that I want to talk to you about this. And the answer might be yes. The answer might be no. The answer might be maybe. The answer might be not yet. But I desire

connection with you.

My God. Because we think God is slow. But in one Peter, he says, actually, it's not a slow thing. Because God is beyond our time.

So we think he's slow, but he's not. He's patient. He's kind. And he has his purpose. So can we, as his children, go to him and go, I hate this God. I hate the fact that I'm going through this tunnel. That I feel like this. Can you help me? I'll tell you, it's not easy to keep that heart where it doesn't become resentful. Where it doesn't become bitter. Bring your requests to God.

[34 : 47] Knowing that sometimes his answer is no. Maybe. Knowing that what he thinks is best is often painful as well. Right?

C.S. Lewis is one of the things that says that. Actually, we're not doubting the fact that God knows what's best for us. What we're doubting is how, what we're asking is how painful it's going to be. Right? Right? Because, like, God, we know that this will, this will, you know, God works for the good of those who love him.

Romans 8. But it doesn't mean it's not going to be painful. When I first graduated from teaching, I thought I'd be getting a teaching job straight away.

And I remember going to the first interview at school. And I thought I, I thought I killed it. I thought the lesson, the lesson was great. I thought it was good. I was like, this is it. This is me. This is the school I'm going to be at. Already looking at my commute from where I'm going to live.

And then afterwards, it was like, oh, no, sorry. It was a, you were close second. I was like, dang. And I was praying, God, I think this is it. This just matches perfectly with my, where I am and what I'm doing.

[35 : 46] And it wasn't. And then the second one came and it was this, and it was the same. I was like, oh, no, actually, thank God that you didn't give me the first one. Because it's this one. This is the school that I'm supposed to be at. God, thank you for letting me have this interview here today.

Thank you for letting me kill it once again. I am just so good. You just poured your giftings onto me. Thank you. And then it wasn't the second one. I was like, dang. I'm more proud and delusional than I thought I was.

And then I tried the third one. Okay, this. Okay, God, I'm so glad you didn't let me have those first two jobs. Because it was not those two. Thank you. That you know better than me. And then it happens again.

Oh, my goodness. By the fourth one, I'm like, God, just whatever you want. Just, like, please, just. I just need a job. And then I get it.

And then I look back now. I was like, oh, my goodness. This is exactly how it should have been. This is the journey that he took me on. And it was painful. Getting rejected is painful. Not hearing. Not getting what you want is painful.

[36 : 47] What lamenting shows us is that we can actually go to him and still worship. Worship, but also still grieve. I talked about Abraham last week. Do you remember that? The first mention of worship is him taking Isaac to the mountain and saying, hey, we're going to worship with my son by giving my son to you.

Do you think he wasn't grieving when he was going up that mountain? He for sure was grieving when he was going up that mountain. Well, first of all, it's like, what am I going to tell my wife? We waited a long time for this kid.

And now we're going to live. I have to walk down this mountain by myself. The son that you gave me, God, I'm going to have to leave him here.

I'm going to have to commit this act that's just going to be so painful to me. And then I have to walk back down by myself. Do you think he wasn't grieving? I truly believe he was grieving.

Can we be in a place where we can grieve and worship together? Someone else said lamenting is basically when despair hopes and hope despairs.

[37 : 48] There's this gratitude and grief that we hold in tension together. Can we be people who are acquainted with grief? And then he finishes here in verses five and six.

He does the turn. But is what Queenie mentioned. 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. This does not make sense. How you start off saying, God, you've forgotten me. You've not been around. And suddenly you've finished. But I have trust in your steadfast here. Another translation is undying love.

And I rejoice in your salvation. How did you get there? Because he stops and goes, actually, it's not about the thing that I'm facing. It's not about the loss that I'm feeling. It's about who God is and what he's done.

And so that's the journey that he goes on. And he finishes with saying, actually, God, but you have dealt bountifully with me. He reminds himself. He remembers that, actually, even though there were all these rejections, all these losses beforehand, that God has been good every single time.

[38:49] So, therefore, he's going to be good now. And he will continue. And actually, he says it in the past tense. And he has dealt bountifully with me because he's talking about the past. And he's talking about this current situation that he's in right now.

And he's declaring that this will be past tense soon as well. And I will be able to say that he has dealt bountifully with me. That he has come through for me in the past. And he will come through for me right now. And there's the song from Elevation Worship.

And he will do it again. Do we have that kind of heart where we go through that journey? If we're like saying, hey, I don't feel joy. I don't feel delight. Maybe it's because you haven't walked through sorrow and desolation enough yet.

Maybe you haven't processed it in the way that the psalmist has. Maybe you haven't wept as Jesus had. I'm not saying to make you feel bad. I'm saying try it.

I'm saying let yourself go into that space where you can actually grieve and lament. And the promise is at the end there will be joy. There will be delight.

[39:51] Lament is the voice of faith struggling to believe that God is good when life is not. Take comfort in what Jesus did in the garden. Take comfort in Isaiah 53 when he was he is the man of sorrows.

Jesus acquainted with grief. Why? Because of what we did to him. And yet somehow in John 16 he also says, and I have come to turn your sorrow into joy.

And every woman who has given birth and gone through the process of labor will understand what Jesus was saying in John 16 when he says it was painful. And there will be groans and pains and agonizing and yet there will be joy at the end.

That's what he promises. Why is that though? Why can we trust in what he says? It's because he went to the furthest end. The depths of Sheol is what the book says.

He went to the very end and showed us that there is life. We can grieve with hope is what 1 Thessalonians 4 says. Paul says, don't grieve as those who have no hope.

[40:59] Why? Because you are people of the resurrection. Why? Because you believe in a savior who came, who died and who rose again. So what we can be is we can both be the people of the cross and also people of the resurrection.

And you can hold those things together and go, I am dead in my sin. I am a person of the cross.

And the sorrow and the grief that comes from that. But I am also a person of the resurrection.

That Christ dealt with that. He died for that. And now he lives in me again. That is how we grieve with hope. That is how we approach him and go, my heart is filled with sorrow.

I am deeply troubled. My tears have been my food day and night. Yet. But I will trust in your steadfast love. I will trust in your undying love. Why? Because you died for me.

And then you rose to life again. Can I encourage you to try that? If there's one thing I want to ask the Lord to give us today is the gift of lamenting, of grieving.

[42:05] In a way that will draw us closer to him. A couple of weeks ago, Gabe shared with us about the word of God.

And credit to Paul, who's not here today. He started a WhatsApp group with a group of us who wanted to memorize scripture. And I will share mine with you today because it's appropriate for the message.

But I might stumble. Mine was Hebrews 4. 14 to 16. Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. Jesus, the son of God.

Let us hold fast our confessions. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. Yet in every respect was tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us draw near with confidence the throne of grace. So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We have a God who knows what sorrow is.

[43:08] Who knows what grief is. He said those words in Psalm 22. Why have you forsaken me? He knows what it's like to feel the distance of God.

And yet he took to the cross to deal with that. And he now lives so that we can grieve with hope. I'm going to invite me and the team up to lead us in the song again.

Just a little bit like last week. But honestly, the prayer is that the Lord would just do and show us whatever he wants us to do. Let us come at this time with anticipation and expectation.

But really just allow God to do whatever he wants to do. Some of us have grief, deep grief that we have suppressed for many, many years. And some of us have just had a terrible week. And you just want to be able to tell God, this week has sucked.

Whatever it may be, would you embrace the spiritual discipline of lamenting? Knowing that there is a tunnel and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

[44 : 19] And would you not lose heart? That even though everything around you is wasting away, you are being renewed day by day. That the light momentary afflictions that you've got going on are preparing you for an eternal weight of glory.

That far outweighs anything that you're struggling with. I don't know how you want to do it. Maybe you are just going to spend some time and go, well, what am I grieving?

What am I lamenting? What am I feeling the loss of? And maybe it's you bring out your phone and you journal a little bit, whatever it might be. Amen. I want to invite us into a time of corporate lamenting.

And it might not even be about you. It might be like what Jesus saw when he looked at Jerusalem and he said, this is not how it was supposed to be.

It might be you looking at the city and feeling the same. It might be you looking at the world and going, this is not how it was supposed to be. And God, that sucks. Would you bring that to him?

[45 : 29] Would you cry? Would you complain? And would you request? Would you remember? Me, he's going to lead us in a song called Lay It All Down. In fact, this is this song again.

What music? Bring strong memories back for me. This was the song that we had when Alicia was in the hospital. When she was first born. And we were like, she's just about to be operated on.

And I was a mess. And I was just wandering around the hospital. Not knowing whether that was the last time I was going to hold her hand. And this was the song that was just constantly in my ears.

God, I'm just going to lay it all down. I hate that I'm here. I hate that she's hurting. I don't know whether she's going to come out. But would you join us together to lament?

To lay it all down. Can I invite us to stand?

[46 : 41] Lord, we come to you now. With any cries and complaints that we have in our own hearts. Lay them down at your feet.

We surrender the resentment. We surrender the bitterness. We surrender the doubt and the fear. And so I ask, if there is anything on your heart today.

That you want to begin the process of lamenting. The discipline. Of the prayer of tears. Would you try.

Would you let go. Holy Spirit, we pray for anyone here.

Who has those stirrings in their hearts. That you would release them.

[48 : 08] That you would rescue them. You would rescue us. And have the team just finish us with the song again.

And as we wrap up here, we... We pray that the Lord would move. And most of all, that the Lord would draw us closer to you.

And if you see someone next to you who could do with a hug and a prayer. Would you do that?

Would you feel comfortable in praying for them? One final thing I'd like to say is...

Lamenting isn't an out-of-control, one-off emotional experience. It's a discipline that you choose to go on a journey.

And a pathway. From distress, from sorrow. To joy. So as Queenie said, it doesn't finish here. In fact, maybe I'll even encourage you.

[49 : 20] Include this in part of your spiritual discipline. On a week-out basis. Bring it to God. Take whatever you have to God. Because it's the throne of grace.

Where mercy and grace awaits. With a Savior who knows. With a Savior who sympathizes. With the sorrow and the weaknesses. Lord Jesus, as we go from here, we pray that you would go with us.

In fact, there's nowhere we want to go that doesn't include and involve you. Even into the depths. Even into the depths of distress. We go there with you.

And we come out with you. Empower us to be people of the cross and people of the resurrection. That we may know you and the power of your resurrection. That we may share in your sufferings. Becoming like you in your death. And that by any means possible attain the resurrection from the dead. We thank you, Lord. Thank you for this time today. [50 : 25] We take our grief with us. But we couple it with hope. Thank you, Lord. In your name we pray. Amen.