

## International House of Prayer of Greater Fort Wayne

...a day and night , city-wide, multi-church prayer and worship ministry

### The Way of Lament

The headlines this week have been breathtaking to say the least - hundreds of lives lost as a bridge collapse's in India, in a 'crush' in Seoul Korea and in dual car bombings in Mogadishu Somalia and that was all in a 24 hour news cycle. This does not account for the ongoing personal challenges that all of us face including strained/fractured relationships, ongoing illnesses, and losses that we deal with as we see the changes in our own country. Something deep in us cries out the truth - this is not how it should be! And something in us aches and throbs under the weight of it all. That beloved is called lament. Because of the aches and pains lament, interestingly, is also something that we instinctively avoid. We will tune out that newsfeed and avoid the living room where strained family relationships present themselves- in an attempt to hold our hand up as if to say stop, and turn our head. To make matters worse for many of us, we have been told to cheer up, that it will all be better just around the next bend of our life. Jesus said 'Blessed are those who mourn, they will be comforted' Matthew 5:4. Jesus, are you saying happy are the unhappy? To be clear, Jesus is saying the Way of Lament is often the way towards life and hope. It may seem counterintuitive but think about this- at the apex of the pain of the cross Jesus cries out in a loud voice a quote from Psalm 22:1 *My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*

Many a bad theological line has been formed from those words communicating that the Father abandoned Jesus and turned His back.

Yet the Apostle Paul locates the Father for us in that moment- 2 Cor 5:19 'namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them...' which by the way lines up with verse 24 of Psalm 22 *'For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him for help, He heard.'* **Beloved the Good News that Jesus reveals in this beatitude - blessed are those who mourn - is His confidence in the Father to bring solace as we face the pain. It is the beauty of the reality that He is present with us in our pain.**

**The instinct of turning and avoiding pain is in all of us and it looks familiar (holding up our hand). Jesus invites us to a different posture. The way of lament is to face the pain - no pretense required - simply bury our head in our hands - the original word meant to wail.**

Beloved the way of Lament in Psalm 22:1 is expressed in the confidence of the Father who sees and hears in verse 24! Truth be told I am not sure if I can recall very many times in my spiritual background that I have heard an encouragement to lament. Perhaps an acknowledgment of pain but almost always I heard the idea that we needed to be encouraged to live and walk in hope and joy. *Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.* That seems to indicate a different way.

In Jewish tradition the book of Lamentations is a part of the 5 ancient scrolls that make up the last third of the Hebrew Bible. Each of the scrolls is read as a part of the 5 major holidays in the Jewish tradition. Watch this - Lamentations is read on the saddest day of the year Tish B'Av - the day of remembrance of the destruction of the temple and many following destructions that have come upon the Jewish people. It is an annual day of fasting to remember - **to tell their story and honor the pain of their story.** Now to some it has become almost superstitious - I don't want to travel etc on that day - which completely misses the point of lament. **Lament is not about avoiding or turning away from pain but rather to face the pain and remember, to honor it.**

This is how Jewish tradition defines what it means to lament;

- *To remember where it hurts, how it got that way, to tell the journey, to honor the pain, not become the story.* (Meaning -the Pain is not who you are.) *If Lamentations is a sacred text. Your laments are also.*

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And the secret is simply this: **Christ in you!**

Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come. Col 1:27b, JB Phillips

*Blessed are those who mourn (lament) for they will be comforted.* That word for comfort means to call to one's side - to be near - its about Presence! One of the places that we see Jesus lament is in John 11 when Lazarus died - verse 33 *When Jesus therefore saw her (Mary) weeping and the Jews who came with also weeping, He was deeply troubled ... vs 35 Jesus wept.*

Beloved this is Jesus lamenting over pain and loss. But then He comes to Martha and says *did I not tell you if you believe you would see God's glory?* **From Lament comes new Life and Lazarus is raised.** Now unfortunately some have taken Jesus' words to say you simply need to believe your way away from the pain - but I ask you why? Why is Jesus in lament? Deeply troubled and weeping? Beloved, I submit to you that part of lament is to allow the pain and sorrow of the story to be seen and heard - not as a problem to be solved but as a place to be embraced! So let me say this clearly - the idea that we can believe our way away from pain is a lie!

This is not the only place we encounter Jesus' lament - the most powerful moment is in the garden and later on the cross. On the cross He cries out 'My God My God why, have you forsaken me?' The Cross is the fullest expression of lament, where the pain of humanity is laid bare and, as Jesus faces the pain, He knows there will be such a thing as resurrection. Then He is laid in a tomb, beloved. The tomb is where we locate Jesus' dead body and His resurrected body! **From lament comes new life!** It strikes me that Psalm 22 is followed by Psalm 23. So maybe in today's heavy news we can bury our head in our hands and lament - allowing the ache of our hearts to be comforted by the source of all life in the presence of our Father God.

### **How can I begin to practice The Way of Lament?**

- Dare to name and sit with your pain without any qualifiers. Consider writing your lament to give voice to your pain— one of the best tools to use is the Prayer book of Jesus—The Psalms! More than just reading them, pray one a day, allowing them to give expression to your pain.
- Consider what it means to mourn with those who mourn - 'solutions' not necessary. A key part of this is to allow others to be seen and heard. Don't try to fix it, just sit with them in the pain.
- Remember most of us have no better vision than Mary....*Lord if you had been here* - it looks like you are not...we need eyes to see His presence in the pain!

### ***A Prayer of Lament:***

**Oh God we find ourselves in a time of great sorrow. Give us the gift of tears that moves us beyond sadness into compassion, to You we cry out, to You we run, for where else would we go?**

**We feel the weight of our broken world, through wars, famines, and disasters, in injustice, hatred, and oppression. The nations desperately need Your deliverance.**

**Give us the gift of tears that moves us beyond sadness into compassion. Empower us not only to cry about others but also to weep *with* them. Teach us to lament, more than just to regret our circumstances. Be near to us, Oh God. Reveal Your Kingdom to our hearts and our community.**

**Restore us to an awareness of Your presence.**

This message can be heard in full on our website [www.ihopfw.com](http://www.ihopfw.com).

With gratitude and integrity we steward your gifts. Thank you for partnering with the mission the Lord has given us in this hour as we partner with Him for His kingdom to be established.

Please make your **tax deductible** contribution to:

**IHOP Fort Wayne  
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Ben and Denise, Please agree with us over these prayer needs for the next month...

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