

Sermon: “I Remember His Faithfulness”

Text: Lamentations 3:19-26

Introduction:

In the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations is called *Ekah* (“How”), after the first word in the book. This word occurs in 1:1, 2:1, and 4:1 to emphasize how much Jerusalem has suffered. But over time, the rabbis began to call the book “*loud cries*” or “*lamentations*”. The entire book contains only laments. It marks “the funeral” of the once-beautiful city of Jerusalem (established as the capital by King David back in 1000BC). This book keeps alive the memory of Jerusalem’s fall in 586/587BC to King Nebuchadnezzar, and teaches all believers how to deal with suffering.

Although the book doesn’t identify its author, it’s nearly certain that Jeremiah the prophet wrote it. Not only was Jeremiah actually and physically present as Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, but there are MANY similarities in theological emphasis and vocabulary between the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations.

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations as an eye-witness—possibly with the help of a personal assistant (aka: “a scribe”) by the name of Baruch. It is very likely that Jeremiah saw the destruction of the walls, towers, homes, palace and temple in Jerusalem. He wrote while the events remained painfully fresh in his mind. The language that is used in Lamentations closely parallels that used by Jeremiah in his much larger prophetic book.

It’s important to remember that the destruction of Jerusalem didn’t happen “out of the blue”. Eight hundred years earlier, Joshua clearly stated (Joshua 23:15-16) that if Israel was unfaithful, Jerusalem would fall. Now, for over forty years, Jeremiah had prophesied of coming judgment—and had been hated and scorned by the people for doing so. Be clear, though, that Jeremiah took NO PLEASURE in being right. It BROKE HIS HEART that the people of God were so disobedient. And now the city lies in ruins. God did precisely what He said that He would do (using Jeremiah to say it). And Jeremiah writes an entire book filled with nothing but lament.

The primary focus of Lamentations is on God’s judgment in response to Judah’s sin. However, a second theme is the HOPE that is found in God’s compassion. Though the book deals with disgrace, it turns to God’s great faithfulness. Even though the people living at that time would have THOUGHT that there would have been no way for God to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, God was certainly moving in the Upper Story in ways far beyond what they could see in the Lower Story.

There are so many lessons that we can learn from Lamentations. The first is the clear reality that even though God is good—and His patience is great—there comes a time when God says “enough is enough”. We can only test God for so long. We are also reminded of God’s great sovereignty and absolute power. Things that we might think could never be changed or done away with—can actually be changed in a moment. Think about all of the ways that things have changed just in the year 2020! But we must never lose heart. Along with God’s righteous judgment comes His great mercy. Jesus is always with us, and has come into this world to be our savior and deliverer. Even though this world will fall—God’s people will stand strong!

Examination:

- Read **Lamentations 1:1-7**

- The first word of verse 1 in the Hebrew Bible—as well as most word-for-word modern English translations of Lamentations 1:1—is the word “How”. “HOW deserted lies the city.” It’s not so much a question as it is a stunned realization of the way that things are. Jeremiah is essentially saying: “How can this be!?” “How could this be any worse!?” How hard. How bad. How much struggle. When you think about our world today—what would you say about all that is happening? How would you fill in this blank, “How _____”?
- When Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry 40 years earlier, Jerusalem seemed invincible. It was a spectacular city. According to verses 1-3, what is the situation now (at the time of writing)?
- Perhaps you’ve heard the term *personification*. It’s when you attribute human qualities or characteristics to things that aren’t human. How do we see Jeremiah using personification as he describes Jerusalem in verse 2?
- Not only does Jerusalem weep and mourn, even the ROADS that lead to Jerusalem are mourning. (v. 4) Why?
- Verse 5 speaks to the REASON as to why Jerusalem has become a slave to the surrounding nations and is filled with grief. What’s the reason?
- When you read (v. 6) that “the splendor has departed from Daughter Zion” (Jerusalem), can you think of any parallels of this happening in our world today? Are there places that, even recently, were considered to be “full of splendor” —that now seem very empty and useless?
- How has this year of Covid-19 brought you grief? What are some of the great losses? Can you relate to what Jeremiah is saying here in Jeremiah 1?

- Read **Lamentations 3:19-26**

- As Jeremiah continues with this theme of lament and sorrow, what does he have to say about it in verses 19-20? What four things bring him sorrow in v. 19? What happens in his soul as he thinks about these things in v. 20?
- Verse 21 is a striking and powerful turning point. It begins with the word “Yet”. We often use words like “however” or “but”. As you think about your own life today, how would you fill in this statement: “As I think about all that is happening in the world today, my soul is downcast within me. But _____”
- How important is hope? Where does hope come from?
- What does verse 22 say about God’s love and compassion?
- Verse 23 may well be the most hopeful verse in the entire Bible. It speaks to the fact that God’s love and compassion are new every morning. Do you believe that? Do you believe that God’s love is brand new every morning?
- One of the great hymns of the faith is “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” It’s based on this verse. What is it about God’s faithfulness that makes it great?
- What two things do we see in verses 25-26 that we need to be doing to experience God’s goodness and His salvation?

Application:

As we enter this Advent season, in this very difficult and depressing year, remember that God is faithful. More than that, He is WITH YOU! Count the many ways God has been good to you.