

Good Morning.

Curtis and I went to a concert last night –a concert that followed a rodeo and if the sign of a good rodeo is you get mud on your shirt, we were at a good rodeo!

We were there for the singer though – got our tickets thanks to Sophia’s work.

And he had some good songs. But the ones that the crowd really knew were about heartbreak and longing. Songs I found somewhat amusing as the songwriter himself is only 17, what does he really know about heartbreak and longing?

But then, I remember being 17 and feeling like the words of Janis Ian’s song “17” – mostly because my sister Deanna played it a lot – “spoke” to me. They go, *I learned the rules at 17, that love was meant for beauty queens, and high school girls with clear skin smiles, who married young and then retired...it isn’t all it seems, at seventeen.*

What is your the song that rings in your head when you remember being young and so passionate and full of longing??? (LISTEN)

Well, this summer we are delving into the Psalms. And Psalms are the songs of their day – words given more impact due to their poetry and connection to music.

Psalms are also, if you take your bible and ask for inspiration – and let the bible fall open to see what you get...you get the psalms 3 out of 5 times. I tried it. The other 2 times I got Ezekiel...so I stopped and looked to see what Ezekiel had to say to me, and on the 2 pages it opened to, each chapter said “Then he led me to...” and “then he brought me to...” and “then he brought me back...” and finally “then he brought me by the way of...”

I didn’t finish reading Ezekiel – I heard that I was on the right track of where I was being led today.

I will be honest. I did not want to do a sermon. I was supposed to do the sermon 2 weeks ago, but I could not, so Curtis stepped in and did a beautiful job. I was – I am – very angry and sad these days. I find myself weeping unexpectedly and completely whole-heartedly. I feel like everything I value, love, and work day to day is being attacked and dismantled.

But Curtis made me promise that, letting go of speaking 2 weeks ago, I would try again in August. When I chose today, Pastor “warned” me, it was not going to be

an easy psalm as it is a one of the disorientation psalms. If you remember we're doing the Psalter psalms or organizing chart...where they go from orientation "Aha!" to disorientation "why?? what in the world??" to reorientation "oh – back to loving god!"

I thought, well, I feel disoriented these days, perhaps this will be good.

Well, sorry to say, I was completely uninspired, undirected with this psalm.

So I got some help from a site suggested by Pastor called Working Preacher of Luther Seminary. There I found words by Rolf Jacobson, Craig Koester, Kathryn Schifferdecker. I also found a definition or two from the Belmont University Library, a Christian library in Nashville, and I also found a site called the Expectations Project -whose mission is: **The Expectations Project mobilizes people of faith to demand excellent public schools for children who are Black, Brown, in poverty and otherwise marginalized.**

I found words, sentiments, thoughts, that I hope will help us. I won't tell you who I'm quoting when – but trust me – most of these words are not mine. They are where I was led to. To get started.

This is a psalm of lament. A lament psalm is Kind of the blues of its day. Of sadness and anger and despair. A psalm of lament is also the most common type of psalm in the book.

I wondered, what does "lament" really mean?

Lament is defined as a passionate expression of grief or [sorrow](#).

English Theologian, N.T. Wright said, "*Lament is what happens when people ask, 'Why?' and don't get an answer. It's where we get to when we move beyond our self-centered worry about our sins and failings and look more broadly at the suffering of the world.*"

A lament is a prayer in pain that is meant to lead to trust. Laments are more than merely the expression of sorrow. The goal of Biblical lament is to recommit oneself to hoping in God and believing God's promises. It is a faithful and Godly response to pain, suffering, and injustice.

And this psalm is also one of Disorientation – of course you can see that as it starts with the floods rising....

“Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.”

No image better captures for the ancient Israelites, what it feels like when the bottom drops out, than the image of flooding waters. That image is prevalent in the Psalter’s prayers of disorientation - also called “prayers for help” and “laments” - and not just in Psalm 69.

For example, Psalm 130 begins with the famous cry, “Out of the depths, I cry to you.” Psalm 42/43 has despair, “all your waves and your billows have passed over me” (42:7). And Psalm 88 cries out, “Your dread assaults ... enclose me like a flood” (verses 16b-17a).

A good time to remember that A psalm of lament is also the most common type of psalm in the book.

All these images still speak with surprising force. When have you felt like you were “up to your neck” and couldn’t take any more? When have you felt like you were simply “drowning” in stress or crisis? We still speak this way.

I just told you – I didn’t want to speak because I felt this way.

Two weeks ago our psalm told us that there are those who will thrive because their roots are deep in the word of the lord...and the chaff, the wicked, will blow away.

We know that life is not that simple. You can do good all day and not feel like you are thriving. You can watch the chaff do wicked chaffy things and seem to grow and billow.

So, if we turn to the psalms, the goal, the hope, the prayer, is that there is basic direction here.

Laments are the prayers the songs in which people are honest with god with our feelings of grief, anxiety, anger, or even hate. The psalms of lament allow human beings, allows us, to speak truly to God, to hold God to Gods promises, to say – look God, you promised you’d do this, and you haven’t done it, do it now.

Lament is the feelings we may not always be willing to acknowledge in our life of faith, yet are brought to the surface like every other feeling –and are given into Gods hands, like every other feeling – not just praise not just thanksgiving but here lament, complaint and sorrow, and grief, and anger and it’s o.k. to do that. Especially in prayer.

The psalms of disorientation admit that life is not as well-ordered as a simple Sunday school faith may pretend. They acknowledge that life is really messy, and they protest to heaven that things should not be as they are. But these psalms, through prayer, evoke action from God — they help move us, the sufferer, to a new place.

They give us words for the deepest, darkest nights of our lives — when the bottom drops out, when the pain seems too much to bear. They tell us that God is big enough for everything we've got — our pain, our anger, our questions, our doubts. They even suggest that genuine biblical faith is comfortable challenging God. And that God is present with us precisely when it feels like God isn't there

So in essence, God invites it. God's O.K. with us lamenting.

Walter Brulemonge Psalm scholar - Lament songs are the words where we can say to God – you are not acting like the god you promised you would be. And give us the words to lay that before God.

We see that in the first line – of just being swamped...save me oh god...

One theologian I found noted that this is the one of the psalms that early Christians went to in reflecting on the experience of Jesus.

In verse 9 it says “zeal for your house consumes me.” Jesus' zeal for God, his commitment to living out the will of God would eventually lead to his own crucifixion.

If we look through the lens of Jesus', his own experience, it is part of the psalm – he shared in that sense of being consumed and overwhelmed, that sense of being thirsty for God. It's part of his own story as well as our own story.

So it gives us permission to lament. Use lament in our life of faith.

And then we have Matthew. This verse is at the end of Jesus' Sermon on the mount. And it is all about prayer. Ask, knock, seek.

Jesus is telling us we have a God who listens to us in crisis. Who hears us when we pray.

So - The point that I am led to today is, if you sink your roots deeply into the water and soil of god, when things get rough, you will have resources to survive.

It may not feel good or resolved, but you are allowed to say “ God, the waters are up to my neck – where are you???” And you know, you have joined a long list of believers in conversation and relationship with God.

Amen.