

## Lament and Hope

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THROUGH THE VALLEY / Lament; Hope / Lamentations 3:19–24

In a world of “either/or,” lament can bring us to a more honest place of “both/and.” We can both reckon with the full weight of our sorrows and experience hope in our faithful, loving God.

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## Focus Statement

- In a world of “either/or,” lament can bring us to the more honest place of “both/and.”
  - We can *both* reckon with the full weight of our sorrows *and* experience hope in our faithful, loving God.

## Things to Consider

- Jeremiah, who is traditionally seen as the author of this book, laments his affliction and homelessness/wandering.
  - As a community, we experience afflictions too.
    - For example,
      - declining membership,
      - Decreased giving
      - THE PANDEMIC

## What Scripture Says

- Jeremiah honestly faces his affliction – no sugarcoating! –
  - and at the same time brings their lament before God
    - whom they ultimately trust.

- Lament before a steadfast, loving God differs from mere “complaining,”
  - in the sense that lament contains a hopefulness born of trust.
- It is possible, even a good thing,
  - for lament and hope to dwell in the same space
    - and at the same time.
  - In our time of lament, we can lay down or rest for awhile.
    - At some point, we have to get back up.
      - That doesn’t mean lament is over.
        - Particularly with grief, it almost has to be both.
  - Having the space to be honest and pour ourselves out before God,
    - gives us the ability to get up, live, serve and be.
  - We don’t abandon lament or hope for the other-
    - it can both be fully both at the same time.
  - We see this dynamic in the scripture where, in verses 19-20,
    - the writer honestly pours themselves out before God
      - and then in verse 21 where hope starts to soothe the lament.
    - Eventually, our suffering becomes a scar instead of a wound.
  - Also, it is important to note that while this scripture passage only shows two verses of “lament” before focusing on hope,
    - Lamentations chapters 1-2 and the beginning of chapter 3 are all focused on lament and the remaining verses in chapter 3,
      - as well as chapters 4-5 show a mix of lament, hope, supplication etc.
    - So, contrary to what our short selection might imply if taken out of context,
      - shifting from lament to hope is not often quick or linear.

- In verses 22-23, the writer recalls God’s steadfastness.
  - Sometimes we can look back on past griefs or painful experiences and see how God sustained us through them.
    - This can be one way that we nurture hope for the future.
      - God is steadfast even when we waver.
- Trusting, even when it hurts and is hard,
  - and finding peace and hope in that place is part of discipleship.
- When we face life – and God - with honesty, we can face it with hope.

## What This Means for You

- Let me ask you, where can you shift from “but” to “and” in your own life?
  - How does that change your perspective and provide a possibility that brings hope?
- Are you currently in a season of waiting?
  - How can you move towards acceptance that this is a season of waiting, even if it feels too long/hard?
- Jeremiah describes how he sees God and what he believes to be true about God.
  - What characteristics of God can you embrace in this time of affliction that might allow you to find some hope?
- Friends, the basis of the Jeremiah’s hope is God’s steadfast love.
  - But there are other characteristics of God or God’s promises that might help us find hope, such as:
    - God creating us in God’s image.
    - God’s presence with us in Jesus Christ,
    - God’s promise of eternal life.

## What This Means for Us

- In verse 19, some translations say “wandering,” while others say “homelessness.”
- Even if we are not experiencing homelessness/wandering ourselves,
  - we are called to serve those who are, to be a place and people of hope in the midst of others’ lament.
- How do we walk alongside people who are waiting
  - and not amplify impatience or make it harder for people who are wandering, waiting, and hoping for something better?
    - We can for instance,
      - do the things we are already doing:
        - We can create spaces for belonging...spaces that meet the needs of people and give them a place to belong...
          - Spaces such as
            - Treasures of Hope,
            - Our Potluck Suppers
            - Hypnosis for Health
            - Theology on Tap
          - We provide space for the Boy Scouts
          - We are providing space for Norwescap and its ministries here.
          - We are providing spaces for chair yoga and Life With Joy, which is a wonderful program that houses and teaches Adults with Autism.
        - But we can do more as well.
      - We often try to move people along before people are ready to move on from a difficult situation

- or we want to move on ourselves because it is uncomfortable.
- But we are called to walk alongside, not scurry away, amen?
- Let us be a people who embrace both lament and hope, recognizing that it is in the midst of one that comes another. Amen? Amen.