

Lament and Action

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THROUGH THE VALLEY / Lament; Action / Luke 19:41–48

While facing reality can sometimes cause us great pain and sorrow, Jesus shows us how this important step can lead us to necessary, God-seeking action.

Focus Statement

- While facing reality can sometimes cause us great pain and sorrow,
 - Jesus shows us how this important step can lead us to necessary, God-seeking action.

Things to Consider

- Sometimes our commitments,
 - even in church,
 - do not reflect Jesus' ways and leadership.
 - What would Jesus lament if he came to our church today?
 - What would he do if he came to our community?

What Scripture Says

- Today's passage:
 - comes immediately after Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem (verses 29-40),
 - the classic "Palm Sunday" reading.
 - Friends, on Palm Sunday, we see a contrast between Jesus and Pontius Pilate/Roman leaders,
 - between two kingdoms and two leadership styles.

- The lament in verses 41-45 reveal Jesus' priorities and the true condition of the city.
 - Jesus values the true peace (v. 42) that comes from recognizing God and following in God's ways (v.44)
 - (e.g., prioritizing prayer (v.46))
- Jesus laments the absence of this true peace in the city
 - and especially in the temple.
- Let's contrast this with what we now call
 - the "Pax Romana" or "Roman peace" of the time which,
 - though "peaceful" and "orderly" (in terms of conflict/war and the economy),
 - was the result of Rome's oppressive empirical power, often enforced through violence.
 - What do I mean by that. Let's look at Jesus. In five days, Jesus will be crucified...
 - Why...because he was seen as disrupting the peace.
 - That is how the Roman Peace...the Pax Romana...was enforced.
- As with all the lament we have encountered over the last several weeks,
 - Jesus' lament here is truth-telling.
 - By telling the difficult truth,
 - Jesus moves to a turning point, a time of decision that leads to action.
 - The lament of verses 41-44 leads to the righteous action of verses 45-46.
 - (The words "but" in verse 42 and "because" in verse 44

- signal this turning point and the connection between what Jesus sees and says in v. 41-44 and his actions in v. 45-46).
- The righteous action that follows from Jesus' lament is a disruption or cleansing of the temple.
 - In fact, according to John Dominic Crossan,
 - the "cleansing" could be seen more of a symbolic destruction of the Temple.
 - Now, it is not Jesus' purpose to harm or destroy the people.
 - Jesus is condemning the actions, not the people;
 - he is lamenting their self-destruction.
 - As a visionary, Jesus sees and knows what the people cannot/do not see and know –
 - that by allowing the temple to become a marketplace,
 - they are on a path to self-destruction and doing harm to their relationship with God.
 - It might seem like Jesus' action here contrasts with the peace of which he speaks in verse 32.
 - However, disruption/action is **NOT** the opposite of peace.
 - Sometimes, it is necessary for the sake of real peace.
 - Notice Jesus' intention was to restore their prayer lives (vs 45).
- After Jesus cleanses the temple,
 - he is able to start teaching the people (v. 47).
- While we don't know exactly what he was teaching,
 - we do know that people were drawn to what he had to say (v. 48).
 - When the people are informed and empowered,
 - those conspiring against Jesus couldn't do anything (v. 48).

- For those of us in leadership, visionary roles,
 - that is often the role –
 - to create a space where people can learn and be empowered.
 - The cleansing of the temple had to happen for that kind of space to be created.
- THIS IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:
 - Jesus didn't come as a new political leader.
 - He came to speak of a different kingdom, God's kingdom.
 - His power was transformative.
 - He wanted that transformation to happen deep within,
 - rather than for people to just blindly follow authority.
 - The transformation/cleansing was first and foremost of the religious space,
 - where people thought they knew what God wanted.
- ALSO NOTE:
 - the Romans still did what Jesus said they would do (as a matter of fact, they completely destroyed the temple in 70 A.D.
 - Jesus' lament and righteous action (temple-cleansing)
 - didn't prevent the destruction of the temple,
 - nor did it prevent Jesus' death.
 - But it was about making a point about who people were spiritually...
 - about their spiritual lives.
 - Some questions this could lead us to ask include:
 - Who are we in the midst of our lament?
 - Does our lament (truth-telling) lead us to righteous (godly) action and if so, what is it?

- How does it serve or empower people?
- And, will we have the courage to take righteous action even as we face powerful forces...
 - Even though we may not “win” in the eyes of the world or in opposition to those forces?

What This Means for You

- Friends, both new and seasoned disciples may be tempted to skip over lament,
 - since popular culture emphasizes instant self-fulfillment and quick fixes.
 - But in lament, we can more clearly define the problem and the pain it causes.
- Understanding the problem, especially on an emotional level, is a necessary first step to action.
 - Let me emphasize that once we understand the problem
 - we can first lament it and
 - Second, we can envision a future marked by healing and peace.

What This Means for Us

- There are times we don't want to address situations that are destructive
 - or we don't even see them as destructive (even in church).
 - Friends,
 - how can we shift from destruction/defensiveness/insisting on our own way to lamenting alongside Jesus?
 - To listening to the truth he makes clear to us?
 - How can we face and name the truth,

- not just to name it but to make needed change or take needed action?
- Remember it is one step at a time –
 - we cannot change everything at once, but we can do something.
 - We can take one step, trusting in Jesus to help us each step of the way. Amen? Amen.