

Lament and Love

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THROUGH THE VALLEY / Lament; Love / John 3:1–17

In both our joys and sorrows, Jesus commands us and shows us how to be a community committed to love in action.

Focus Statement

- In both our joys and sorrows,
 - Jesus commands us
 - and shows us how to be a community committed to love in action.

Things to Consider

- In times of lament, trouble, grief, and great uncertainty,
 - people have different experiences of community – amazing, bad, non-existent... and everything in between.
- This week's scripture shows us the kind of community Jesus calls us to be
 - and wants for us, especially in difficult/grief-filled times.

What Scripture Says

- While this passage does not deal directly with lament,
 - Jesus' words and actions here are deeply relevant to the question
 - of how we are called to be and act in the midst of sorrow, pain and grief.
- Even after this past Sunday's weeping over Jerusalem and knowing that Judas would betray him,
 - Jesus remained committed to love to the end (v. 1).

- Think about what else Jesus could have done that night.
 - He could have left the disciples or just acted as if everything was fine,
 - but instead he chose to prepare them for the trials and grief they would soon face and for life beyond his death,
 - through the gifts of foot washing and a new commandment.
- Foot washing is an intimate act here.
 - Jesus was caring for his disciples, teaching them, and passing the mantle to them.
 - Jesus shows vulnerability in disrobing and humility in getting down and washing someone's feet.
 - He does this as one who is both divine and human.
 - After Jesus' death on the cross and his return to his friends and disciples,
 - he shows that vulnerability again in the invitation to see and touch his side.
 - Human touch is present and part of being in community.
- Jesus is preparing his disciples for the kind of community they will need in their grief and as they emerge from it,
 - one of mutual service and vulnerability.
 - Jesus models being able to carry the grief about his betrayal through this time –
 - to carry it and still move forward and serve in love.
 - Jesus is modeling...but also commanding, "Just as I have done, you must also do," (v. 14-15 & 34).
- In this series, we've talked about communal lament.
 - Jesus is showing here what loving, supportive community looks like.
 - There is solidarity, willingness to get in the muck with each other (literally getting our hands dirty... and feet clean).

- The disciples have been arguing about who is closest to Jesus,
 - but he is showing them here that none is greater than the other.
 - There is work to be done, and it is humbling work.

What This Means for You

- Friends, Verse 14 gives us our call to action this week.
 - How can you serve someone else/others with humility?
 - The Voice translation of the Bible offers this reflection:
 - “Within the pain and the filth, there is an opportunity to extend God’s kingdom through an expression of love, humility, and service ... When Jesus sees disease, He sees the opportunity to heal. When He sees sin, He sees a chance to forgive and redeem. When He sees dirty feet, He sees a chance to wash them.”
 - Where do you see opportunity?
 - Or where do you see something “wrong” or something you don’t like
 - and how might you be able to shift and instead see that as an opportunity to love?
- Society celebrates beauty and wealth as markers of success.
 - But let me remind you how God’s community operates on different values,
 - not avoiding the dirty and humble,
 - but diving in with an attitude of love, acceptance, and service.

What This Means for Us

- Friends, how can our community further embody the values that Jesus displays and teaches in this passage:
 - loving one another, humility, serving one another?

- We are doing the work Christ has called us to...
 - But we must remember keep our hearts in love with Christ.
 - It is our love for Christ that will shape us into Christ's love. Amen?
- In times of pain and grief, this is all the more important (and difficult) to live out
 - as pain can instead often lead us to isolation, competitiveness, defensiveness.
- Sisters and brothers,
 - We can learn to be open and honest about our lament, as Jesus was,
 - and we can also learn to find opportunities to love amidst the temptation to fight or flight.
 - Together, we can support each other and discover new ways of serving others...
 - in love and in humility, making space for all to come, belong, and serve.
 - Amen? Amen.