



Sermon Notes: Steve Stanis,

12 Jan 2025

“Seasons of Life: Brokenness, Grace, and the Way Home”

Readings: Lamentations 1:12-16; 2:10-13, Matt 23:37-39, Rom 8:18-23

Introduction:

The Cry of a Broken World:

When you go to Emergency at the hospital, they ask you to rate your pain out of 10. It's a subjective question. Can you measure pain?

Pain, spiritual, physical or emotional pain, can lie deep in the pit of our stomach.

What do you do with pain?

What do you do with deep, soul-crushing grief when the foundations of your life feel like they've crumbled?

Like the Autumn season in life when the leaves fall.

The leaves of life falling are like the Autumn season exposing the bare branch.

We feel stripped, unprotected and vulnerable.

In a world filled with loss, injustice, and brokenness, these moments are inevitable.

Yet, we often don't know how to respond. Some of us numb the pain with distractions—entertainment, work, or even substances. Others retreat into cynicism or despair.

Our brother Max Boys, when he spoke to the 10am service recently, showed how the leaves of life prepare the grounds for a heavenly home.

We were so deeply encouraged by the sharing and the prayer on the patio.

Max, you showed us that in the Autumn season as the leaves fall, they actually soften the ground in preparation for eternal rest in His heavenly home. Thanks for living out Psalm 23 before us. From verses 1-2:

“The Lord is my Shepherd I will not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.”

Today, as we reflect on the brokenness of this world, we're going to look at **Lamentations Chapters 1 and 2**, where we encounter a profound expression of grief over the destruction of Jerusalem. Did you notice the Matthew 23 reading echoed a similar lament? Through these laments, God teaches us how to bring our pain to Him, how to acknowledge the reality and impact of sin and judgment, and how to hold on to hope in the midst of suffering.

Three thoughts to reflect on this autumn season.

I. The Weight of Brokenness (Lamentations 1:1-11):

The poet begins with a cry of astonishment and grief.

*" How deserted lies the city,
once so full of people!
How like a widow is she,
who once was great among the nations!
She who was queen among the provinces
has now become a slave.!"* Lamentations 1:1

The city of Jerusalem, once a beacon of God's presence, has fallen into ruin. It is personified as a once proud queen, now humiliated and abandoned.

The poet captures the overwhelming sorrow of brokenness.

The city is desolate, her children are gone, and her glory has turned to shame.

This isn't just a historical event; it's the reality of living in a world that does not live God's way...

This weight of brokenness echoes the cry of David in **Psalm 22:1**:

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?"*

Both passages capture the anguish of feeling abandoned, the pain of witnessing destruction, and the longing for restoration. It is interesting to note the lament in Psalm 22 and the hope immediately following in Psalm 23.

Let's pause here and reflect.

How often do we see brokenness in our own lives?

Perhaps it's the failure of a relationship, the pain of betrayal, or the guilt of choices that have led to unintended consequences.

Jerusalem's story is our story. Rebellion against God always leads to loss. When we turn away from the One who gives life, the result is death—not just physically, but emotionally, relationally, and spiritually.

But here's the key: instead of ignoring the pain or blaming others, Lamentations teaches us to confront it. The poet doesn't sugar-coat the devastation; he names it, feels it, and pours it out before God. The challenge today is not to hide our pain from God but completely give it to Him.

Lament is an invitation to honesty with God—a place where we can acknowledge the brokenness in ourselves and the world without fear of rejection.

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

II. The Reality of Judgment (Lamentations 1:12–22, 2:1–9):

As the lament continues, the poet turns his attention to the cause of Jerusalem's suffering.

He doesn't shy away from naming the uncomfortable truth: From Lamentations 1:18

*" The Lord is righteous,
yet I rebelled against his command."*

Jerusalem's downfall is not random. It is the result of God's judgment against their persistent rebellion and idolatry. In chapter 2, this judgment is vividly described. Chapter 2, verse 2

*" Without pity the Lord has swallowed up
all the dwellings of Jacob;*

*in his wrath he has torn down
the strongholds of Daughter Judah.
He has brought her kingdom and its princes
down to the ground in dishonour."*

This is a sobering truth: God takes how we live seriously. His holiness demands justice. Yet, in our modern context, we often struggle with the concept of God's judgment. We know Him to be loving and merciful but His love and holiness cannot ignore our rebellion. To love deeply is to be fiercely opposed to anything that destroys the beloved.

This theme resonates with **Romans 3:23-24**, where Paul reminds us:

*"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
and all are justified freely by his grace,
through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*

Judgment reveals our need for God's grace.

Consider your own life. Are there areas where you've ignored God's will, justified poor choices, or refused to repent? God's judgment may feel harsh, but it's also a form of grace.

It's a wake-up call that forces us to confront the destructive nature of our human ways.

At the same time, this passage shows us something profound: God is not an unfeeling judge.

The lament reveals God's heartache over Jerusalem's destruction. His judgment is not an act of vindictive anger but of righteous love, aimed at leading His people back to Him.

2 Peter 3:9 says,

*"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.
Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to
repentance"*

If you're experiencing the consequences of poor choices, don't harden your heart. Instead, let God's grace draw you to repentance.

This verse from 2 Peter is a beautiful reminder that the falling leaves, although dry and crunchy, God uses, to soften our hearts, as He prepare us for our heavenly home.

III. The Hope Beyond Despair (Lamentations 2:10–22):

While chapters 1 and 2 are heavy with grief and judgment, there is a subtle, yet profound thread of hope woven throughout the lament. The poet cries out to God, acknowledging His sovereignty even in the midst of suffering. From Lamentations 2:19

*" Arise, cry out in the night,
as the watches of the night begin;
pour out your heart like water
in the presence of the Lord!"*

Here, the poet models what it means to lament with hope. He doesn't deny the pain or the reality of judgment, but he directs his cries to God.

Why? Because even in His judgment, God is still merciful.

This is the paradox of Lamentations.

The Bible is not linear. It holds together the reality of human rebellion, the pain of divine judgment, and the hope of God's faithfulness.

Psalm 30:5 reminds us,

*“For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favour lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.”*

For us, living on this side of the cross, that hope is even clearer. In Jesus, we see the ultimate expression of God’s love and justice. He took the judgment we deserved upon Himself, enduring the ultimate lament—separation from the Father—so that we could be restored.

Jesus is the reason we can cry out to God with confidence, knowing that He hears us and will never abandon us. When we face the brokenness of this world, we don’t grieve as those without hope. We lament, yes—but we lament to the God who has already secured our redemption through Christ. That empty cross, like the empty autumn branches, God uses to soften our hearts.

Lamentations invites us to cry out honest and raw prayers. When life feels overwhelming, don’t hide your pain or doubt. Pour out your heart before God, trusting that He is big enough to handle it and loving enough to respond.

Last Wednesday we celebrated Ivy’s life using Philippians 4. This passage is so apt as a funeral procession where we find a final exhortation in Verses 6-7, that says to us,

*“Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
And the peace of God,
which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

As we conclude, let’s return to the question we began with: *What do you do with pain?*

Lamentations chapters 1 and 2 show us that lament is not just an expression of sorrow—it’s an act of faith. To lament is to trust that God is listening, that He cares, and that He is at work even when we can’t see it. And while Lamentations looks ahead to the hope of restoration, we have the privilege of looking back at the cross, where that hope was fulfilled.

Be released by the Spirit of God. God is faithful. He adopts us as His children, the redemption of our bodies, which we read about in Romans 8:23. And so we return to the words of joy we read last week from **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,
who comforts us in all our troubles,
so that we can comfort those in any trouble,
with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”*

Praise be to the God of all comfort. Let us lament with hope, being transformed knowing that our God is both just and merciful, both holy and loving, and always faithful to His promises.

I pray in your autumn seasons that you find comfort in these words, trusting that God will uphold you in His wisdom, guidance, assurance, hope and peace.

Amen.