

At the start of the Reformation of the Church in Scotland in 1557, John Knox wrote to his congregation before going into exile and said,

“You are bishops and kings; your wife, children, servants, and family are your bishopric and charge. Of you it shall be required how carefully and diligently you have instructed them in God’s true knowledge . . .

And therefore I say, you must make them partakers in, exhorting, and in making common prayers, which I would in every house were used once a day at least.”

Let's Worship God

23rd-28th January 2017
Lamentations



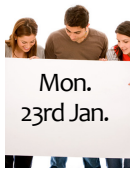
Let's Worship God is a ministry of



Airdrie Reformed Presbyterian Church

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Family worship, a joy to be experienced every day!



Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
The LORD is my portion,
says my soul,
therefore I will hope in him.
Lamentations 3:24

reading

Lamentations 4:1 - The Repetition of Sorrow
The third lament resonates with covenantal hope and confidence in God. We might expect, therefore, that at last those who grieve in Zion have been given beauty for ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a faint spirit (see Isaiah 61:3). But the fourth lament shatters those expectations. Jerusalem still lies in ruin, its temple is still destroyed, and the Prophet is still exclaiming-as he did in the first and second lament - "How!"

notes

One of the difficulties in reading and studying Lamentations is its repetitive nature. Not once, not twice, but three times Jeremiah has already grieved over the destruction he sees, he has sorrowed over the cause of sin, he mourns the source of the chastisement, and he weeps his way into the presence of the Lord. And in this fourth lament he will do it all over again. Of course, far from being vain repetition we see the wisdom of the Spirit in this. He knows that there are some tears that only Jesus himself will be able to dry, and as long as we are on this side of heaven our eyes flow with unceasing streams. Lamentations is repetitive because our grief and sorrow in losses and crosses is often repetitive.

This should remind us, once again, how important it is to "mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). In our insensitivity we sometimes want to tell people to "Get over it," or "It is time to move on." It is true that grief needs to be worked through in Biblical and mature ways - even Jeremiah for all his sympathy does not avoid doing this. But we lack the sensitivity and wisdom of the Spirit if we think overcoming sorrow means drying the eyes and putting behind oneself the hurt and pain of the heart. In caring for those who are filled with grief we need to be prepared to weep with them again and again until Jesus himself will "wipe every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21:4).

questions

1. Why is Lamentations so repetitive?

praise pray

Ps. 42:all
1. Pray that the Lord would make you more sympathetic to those who hurt.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.



Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
The LORD is my portion,
says my soul,
therefore I will hope in him.
Lamentations 3:24

reading

Lamentations 4:21-22 - This Too Shall Pass
Sometimes it seems that the people of God are being overcome. We read in our newspapers and see on our television programs the horrific reports of Christian persecution throughout the world. Nevertheless, God has promised: "Him who dishonors you I will curse" (Genesis 12:3). We see such a fulfillment in the closing words of this fourth lament.

notes

While the Babylonians were the main enemy in the destruction of Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 52:4), it is likely that Edom - the descendants of Esau - encouraged and even helped the Babylonians in the overthrow of Jerusalem. The Psalmist called this to mind when he sang: "Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, 'Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!'" (Psalm 137:7, see also Obadiah 1:1-14). It is for this reason that Jeremiah turns from grief to taunting the Edomites.

In full confidence of God's covenant promise Jeremiah speaks to the daughter of Edom and then the daughter of Zion. To the first he says: "To you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare." To the other he says: "The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished." While Edom will be made to drink the wrath of God to the point of intoxication, his people will not remain forever under his judgment but will be returned from exile and received into his favor. In this we see quite the reversal! Edom's joy will be turned to judgment, and Zion's judgment will turn to joy.

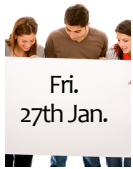
It may seem like the enemies of the church prevail. But the Lord is not slow in keeping his promises. Until then we say with the Prophet Micah: "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication" (Micah 7:8-9).

questions

1. Why will the church never be overcome?

praise pray

Ps. 137:all
1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.



Fri.
27th Jan.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
The LORD is my portion,
says my soul,
therefore I will hope in him.
Lamentations 3:24

reading Lamentations 4:21 - Yes and Amen

notes We saw yesterday the great tragedy in the loss of the king. The people of Judah must have been thrown in to doubt and confusion about all things-especially the covenant promise of God. When the Lord made his covenant with David he had promised to "establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:13). With Zedekiah captured, Jerusalem destroyed, and the Davidic throne empty, the people must have wondered where the promise of God was. Had it failed?

Even as Jeremiah laments the capture of the king he immediately turns to a word of certainty - or to be more precise, a sardonic taunt: "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz; but to you also the cup shall pass." What could possibly have given Jeremiah this confidence? His confidence did not come from his senses - what he saw, heard, or felt. Rather, it was grounded in the unchanging covenantal promise of God.

Unlike Saul, whose kingship was removed for sin, the Lord told David that sin would never dethrone his line: "When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul" (2 Samuel 7:13-14). This was not a free pass to transgress the law of God, as such sin would be severally punished. But it was an unconditional promise that God's covenant mercy would never allow an end to come to the Davidic line. While the kingdom was experiencing the severe discipline of God, he had not forgotten his promise. It is for this reason that Jeremiah knew the tables would turn.

Let us learn to trust the promises of God. We may not always have a present experience or enjoyment of them, but to those who are united to Jesus we can be certain that "All the promises of God find their Yes and Amen in him. That is why through him we utter our Amen to God for his glory" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

questions 1. What had God promised David? Had the promise of God failed in Judah?
2. Who has come to fulfill all the promises?

praise Ps. 132:all

pray 1. Thank the Lord for his particular covenant promises.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.



Tue.
24th Jan.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
The LORD is my portion,
says my soul,
therefore I will hope in him.
Lamentations 3:24

reading Lamentations 4:1-11 - Reduced by Sin

notes When our first parents sinned they plunged all of mankind into sin and misery. It would be hard to estimate the immense loss that sin has brought. The Puritan Ralph Venning wrote: "Well-being is the life of life, and sin bears us so much ill-will, that it deprives us of our livelihood, and of that which makes it worth our while to live. Man was born to a great estate, but by sin, which was and is treason against God, he forfeited all."

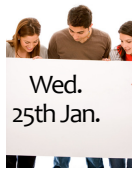
As Jeremiah weeps over the destruction that sin brought he simultaneously sees what sin had reduced the people to. The gold had grown dim (v 1), the precious sons of Zion are regarded like earthen pots (v 2), nurturing mothers have become cruel and negligent (vv 3-4), the fine-dressed are covered in ashes (in v 5), the pure and ruddy princes are black and shriveled (in vv 7-8), and compassionate women have grotesquely boiled their own children (in v 10). Men and women; young and old; noble and peasant had become a hideous sight. This is what Zion with all her former splendor had been reduced to on account of sin. No nation had been so honored and privileged, and no nation - not even the city of Sodom - had lost so much.

This lament demonstrates the immeasurable loss that accompanies sin. While the things Jeremiah sees are horrific, tragic, and even stomach-turning repulsive, they are a small thing compared to the loss of an eternal soul because of sin. Who can measure that? Thankfully, God in Jesus Christ has found a way to "ransom my soul from the power of Sheol" (Psalm 49:15). He did so by sending his Son who identified with our loss - the sin of man left the Son with nothing, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). He forfeited all so that in him we might gain all things.

questions 1. What had sin done to these people?
2. What does that teach us about sin?
3. Why did Jesus give everything up?

praise Ps. 49:1-5

pray 1. Ask God to make you hate sin more and more.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.



Wed.
25th Jan.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
The LORD is my portion,
says my soul,
therefore I will hope in him.
Lamentations 3:24

reading Lamentations 4:12-19 - The Disappointment of Presumption

notes When the Apostle Paul spent time in Ephesus he did not hesitate to proclaim the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). This is something that is required of every man who preaches the Word of God. Difficult as it may be at times and as much as many do not wish to hear, he is to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). What a tremendous responsibility is on those who proclaim God's Word!

This is exactly where many of the priests and prophets of Judah had gone wrong. Jeremiah groans: "This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous." Rather than being like Ezekiel's watchmen on the wall (see Ezekiel 33:1-9) they had not exposed the iniquity of the people (see Lamentations 2:14), nor the sentence of God against covenantal rebellion (see Deuteronomy 28:15). When the counsel of God is truncated by half-truths, when sin is not exposed, and when repentance is not proclaimed then people grow comfortable and presumptuous happily receiving the words "Peace, peace" where there is no peace. That is what happened to these people: "The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem" (v 12). But their presumption was disappointed as God, according to his Word, scattered and regarded them no more.

Presumption is a sin we must constantly guard against. We are told to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), to "be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election" (2 Peter 1:10), and to "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).

- questions**
1. What does it mean to "presume"?
 2. Why do preachers have to tell the whole truth?
 3. How do you make your calling and election sure?

- praise pray**
- Ps. 19A:5-9
1. Pray for your pastor and elders.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 3. Pray for family matters.



Thur.
26th Jan.

Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn
The LORD is my portion,
says my soul,
therefore I will hope in him.
Lamentations 3:24

reading Lamentations 4:20 - Under His Shadow

notes This fourth lament shows us a sweeping and building picture of the destruction that was brought by the Lord on account of Zion's sin. Not only has everything been wrecked, but everyone had been impacted - sons, children, mothers, princes, priests, and prophets. As if that was not enough we come to the pinnacle of human loss: "The breath of our nostrils, the Lord's anointed, was captured in their pits." Certainly, the Lord had devoured the foundation of Zion (verse 11).

It is probably difficult for us to grasp the significance of this event. Though King Zedekiah had done evil in the sight of the Lord (see Jeremiah 52:2-3), he represented the very life of the people and the rule of the Lord. As long as the king was with them they had unity, solidarity, and protection even if they were living in a foreign land: "Under his shadow we shall live among the nations." But even this hope was snuffed out as the king of Judah was captured fleeing Jerusalem and they "put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and the king of Babylon took him to Babylon, and put him in prison until the day of his death" (Jeremiah 52:11).

How expectant these people had been that their king could deliver them, and how hopeless it now seemed. But the praises of Israel remind us: "Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish" (Psalm 146:3-4). We need a king whose reign will never end, and who is from everlasting to everlasting. In Zion's hopelessness we fix our eyes on the Lord's Anointed, Jesus Christ. His dominion is over all nations so that as he gathers us from the north and south, the east and west, we can live under his shadow among all the nations.

- questions**
1. What did the King represent to the people of Judah?
 2. Who is our King and how far does his dominion extend?

- praise pray**
- Ps. 146A:all
1. Ask the Lord to remove your confidence in anything but him.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 3. Pray for family matters.