

SCRIPTURE READING

INTRO: Our scripture reading this morning is taken from the ancient book of poetry called: Lamentations. It speaks of sad times and of much that has been lost to the people. It also expresses bitterness at times, with anger at God too. But the poetry is composed in beautifully creative language. Is our capacity to express our grief and anger in beautiful prose already a sign that healing and rebuilding of life has begun? Listen:

Lamentations 1. 1-5

How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!
How like a widow she has become,
 she that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the provinces has become a vassal.

² She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks;
among all her lovers she has no one to comfort her;
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her,
 they have become her enemies.

³ Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude;
she lives now among the nations, and finds no resting-place;
her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.

⁴ The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to the festivals;
all her gates are desolate, her priests groan;
her young girls grieve, and her lot is bitter.

⁵ Her foes have become the masters, her enemies prosper,
because the LORD has made her suffer
 for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away, captives before the foe.

Lamentations 3. 21-26

²¹ But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
 his mercies never come to an end;

²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

²⁴ 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul,
 'therefore I will hope in him.'

- ²⁵ The LORD is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.
- ²⁶ It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Lamentations 5. 19-22

- ¹⁹ But you, O LORD, reign for ever;
your throne endures to all generations.
- ²⁰ Why have you forgotten us completely?
Why have you forsaken us these many days?
- ²¹ Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored;
renew our days as of old—
- ²² unless you have utterly rejected us,
and are angry with us beyond measure. Amen.

We are listening, O God; **Speak to us!**