

The Hope of Lament
Psalm 14
Sept. 14, 2025

Several weeks ago, when the worship team needed my plan for sermons for the month. I went to my trusty lectionary website resource I use, and it suggested using the psalm passages for the month of September. I read the synopsis, it sounded interesting, so I copied down which psalms were designated for the next 4 weeks and sent them as what I was preaching on. And then this past Monday morning, I got out my sheet with the specific psalm for the day and opened my bible and read Psalm 14. And thought - well the polite version of what I thought is - well shucks. I should have read this closely before I said I was going to preach on it.

I didn't discover until this week. That most lectionary resources - the ones that write commentary and give me ideas for what to preach about - most I use didn't even include psalm 14. The just skip right over it.

I googled "why do some lectionaries have psalm 14 and others seem to have omitted it." The AI generated response said "some have moved away from including this psalm because of its negative themes - it gives a bleak picture of human depravity that can be perceived as difficult or jarring for a worship setting"

Oh great. Perfect.

I also discovered this week that psalm 14 is almost identical to psalm 53. It is the only psalm that is duplicated... not psalm 23. This psalm.

This psalm that says: "They have all gone astray; they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one."

That's good preaching material...

And then the events of the week unfolded and I have to admit. And my morale went from bad to worse.

I have to admit, I'm struggling. Our country isn't ok. Our democracy isn't ok. Are y'all feeling that too? Is anyone else not ok? And I thought I don't have anything else to say besides that.

I have feelings of rage, of helplessness and hopelessness, of sadness...but nothing coherent to say. And some how I have to get up in front of people and preach.

So I decided I'd start by writing my own version of psalm 14...a sept. 14, 2025 Carrilea version...because the energy of that psalm is a whole lot like the energy I have felt this week.

Psalm 14 is a psalm of Lament

The psalm starts by saying “Fools say in their hearts, “there is no God.” But this isn’t about “atheists” - first there is no such concept when this was written. But what that line really means is this...

A fool is one who is morally deficient, who does not live by the law of God/the law of love.

God looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise.

God looks and sees crowds scattering in panic,
As bullets fly into schools, into rallies, into crowds.
the tragedy of political violence

The veneration of a white Christian man
That spewed hatred like wildfire
While school shooting goes unnoticed,
Assassinations in Minnesota
Go unnamed, unnoticed, unspoken.
HBCUs under lockdown for threats
Because blackness is the problem
Even when white men are doing the shooting

From the highest offices of worldly power
Come declarations of hatred for liberals
Declarations of martyrdom for a man who
Said empathy was a new age word that
Does a lot of damage.
Who spoke openly about wanting a
White christian nation.

God looks and sees men in power
Covering up abuse,
Silencing survivors,
Protecting the corrupt,
Saying the call for transparency is a politically motivated hoax,
And still preaching about morality,
And flaunting their Christianity,

Trans children told they cannot play,
Cannot live,
Cannot belong.

Their very existence mocked and demonized in the halls of power,
And they dare to say this is from you, God

Immigrant families thrown into detention,
Brown skin profiled,
Windows shattered,
Parents dragged from cars by masked Christian men,
While the courts call it “justice”

The dismantling of systems
That support the poor
That demonizing of public health
Practices that protect the common good
The health of communities
In the name of a god who cares about some
More than others

Racism is becoming a badge of honor
Patriarchy is consolidating power in our institutions
Hatred is being normalized
Celebrated even—
the narrative of white Christian nationalism is being venerated
Algorithms are controlling and shaping the masses
Profiting off of hatred and division.
Capitalism is destroying the planet.
It may be too late to repair the damage.

It seems there is no escaping

****pause and breath deeply****

Let's pause here. Let's take a breath together. Because lament is heavy. But it is not the end.

But,

But God?

But Love.

But Love is still here.

But what about
My heart that walks around outside my body...
In the little girl I put on the bus in the morning
Giving me a heart sign out the window
as I wave goodbye.

And at night the tiny hands reaching out to hold mine
As they fall asleep.
And their giggles, oh their giggles.

But what about
The belonging that I feel in this space.
the impromptu pizza gatherings on Friday evening.
Learning about 6 7

But what about the peace I feel
singing hymns with friends and strangers over drinks,
Our voices tangling into something holy.

But still the flowers that keep blooming.
And the spring that always comes
But what about the moments before sunrise when the stillness
Makes the dew on the grass glitter with possibility.
And what about the sun setting on the mountains
That makes my heart sing every time.
Even creation keeps preaching hope.

But what about the ways that giving to others
Makes me feel certain of my calling.
And when grief
rips my heart wide open
I would still choose the love,
Still choose the life
Still choose the time I was given.

Yes there is brokenness,
But Love is our refuge
But Love is still worth it.
And this is our hope.
And hope will not let us go.

PAUSE

I cringe when I hear the phrase, 'Our hope is in God.' Too often it rings hollow, like churchy filler words. Too often it conjures up the image of a light-skinned, blue-eyed Jesus- you know the one with shoulder length brown hair hanging in so many old church buildings—and we're supposed to somehow pin our hope to that *person*. But I confess, I don't even know what that means sometimes.

Especially lately. Especially when that Jesus gets dressed up in the veneration of those who spew hatred at the immigrant and the poor, who disparage others as less than, who baptize racism and call it righteousness.

That “hope”—
the one wrapped in nationalism,
weaponized by power,
used to shame and exclude—
feels repulsive.

That hope is not the hope I’m talking about.

The hope I’m talking about
is stubborn and tender.
It is born in lament
and refuses to let go of love.

Writing my own Psalm 14 this week showed me, and reminded me, that without lament,
“hope” is just sentimentality.

Lament is truth-telling.
It looks the brokenness straight in the eye
and refuses to pretend.

Lament says: this is not how things are meant to be.
Which is, in itself, an act of faith—
naming that God’s justice, God’s love, God’s shalom must be something more.

Hope is not the opposite of lament.
Hope is what rises *through* lament.

With lament, hope becomes the most defiant thing we can say:
Yes, the world is broken, but love is still here.

We don’t always make room for lament in church. We don’t want to get too sad, too
serious, too angry, too grief stricken.

But if we don’t lament, we dishonor reality. We leave people unequipped to make sense
of all this.

Psalm 14 gives us permission to tell the truth first. And it reminds us that telling the truth
doesn’t mean we aren’t hopeful—it means hope will rise from the ashes.

When we lament together, we bear one another’s burdens. We give each other permission to say:
“Me too. I feel the rage, the helplessness, the sorrow.”

That shared honesty makes space for shared hope.

So that is what I want to invite us into...

Take a moment and think about or write down at least 1 statement of lament (aka our anger, our grief, our despair), and a sentence of where you see love.

You can share them aloud, you can write it down and bring to the altar, you can write it down and take it with you to get working on it...

Closing:

Some of you may have heard of Black Liturgies before - by Cole Arthur Riley... but she shared a breath prayer this week that I'd like to offer up as our communal prayer...and perhaps a spiritual discipline...

It's a breath prayer.

Inhale :

We are not the same

Exhale: my power has another face.

Inhale:

I release any tool

Exhale: that was meant for my destruction.

Co-opting the methods of the oppressor will not get us free. Our dreaming doesn't have to look like theirs.

-Cole Arthur Riley

BENEDICTION: May God bless you with the clarity to recognize the world as it is, the hope to dream God's dream together, and the power to make God's dream a reality here and now. Amen.