

'Unless You Have Utterly Rejected Us': Lamentations as an Instrument of Community Renewal
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Abstract

From time immemorial, different societies have employed a variety of methods for the expression of loss and grief. In the ancient context of the book of Lamentations, songs of communal lament functioned to promote community cohesion and restoration in the face of unspeakable tragedy.

This presentation will highlight some of the ways in which Lamentations has been used historically to promote reordering of both the community and the individual psyche, and suggest some ways in which Lamentations can be an asset in the church's own communal life and mission to the world.

Call to Worship: Psalm 74

Leader: How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever?

Congregation: Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them!

L: Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

C: Have regard for the covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.

L: Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame; let the poor and needy praise your name.

C: Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!

All: Do not forget the clamor of your foes, the uproar of those who rise against you, which goes up continually!

Prayer of Invocation: LORD God, King from of old, we come to You as Your children—calling You, appealing to You: Come and visit us today as we worship. We are broken in body and spirit, scarred by our sin and the sins of this fallen world. But You have promised to make all things new in Your Son, Jesus Christ. As we prepare to worship You now, send Your Holy Spirit to renew our faith in Your eternal promises, so that at the last we may receive the glorious resurrection inheritance You have secured for us through Jesus Christ our Lord, who reigns forever with You and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Further Reading

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