

Moving from Lament to Hope

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green cloth** or scarf to signify that we are moving into "ordinary time".*

Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.

Greeting

Light Candle

Acknowledgement of Country

Call To Worship –

God has saved us and called us to a holy life—
not because of anything we have done,
but because of his own purpose and grace.
This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus
before the beginning of time,
but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour,
who has destroyed death
and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.
Let us worship God.

written by Norman D. Yeater



Listening for God's Voice

Bible Readings:

Luke 17: 5-10

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

⁶ He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

⁷ "Suppose one of you has a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ⁸ Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? ⁹ Will he thank the servant because he did

what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'

Psalm 137: 1-5

- ¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
² There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
³ for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
⁴ How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?
⁵ If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.

2 Timothy 1: 5-10

⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

Appeal for Loyalty to Paul and the Gospel

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. ⁸ So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. ⁹ He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Reflection

This is a picture (at the top of page 1) of the Kangbashi district of Ordos, a marvel of urban planning, 137-square kilometres of shining towers, futuristic architecture and pristine parks carved out of the grassland of Inner Mongolia. It is a thoroughly modern city, but for one thing: No one lives there.

Many years ago the Chinese Communist party (the Chinese central government) decided that the best way to help the population of China was to bring it out of poverty. Like many countries, China suffered with a significant per centage of their population who lived in poverty. The Chinese government set a target of moving its population out of poverty, and in the past 40 years those living on or below the poverty line has dropped by 770 million people... nearly 50% of their population were living on \$1.90 per day or less but no longer. Their two key strategies – population control and modern housing. There were other things like creating a strong manufacturing sector, engaging in tourism (bringing the world

to them), and completing with the rest of the world like the rest of the world. At one stage, China's largest import was empty containers...

This city was built as one of hundreds of sparkling new cities sitting relatively empty throughout China, built by a government eager to urbanize and modernise their country. However, these cities have been shunned by people, unable to afford it or hesitant to leave the rural communities they know. I think about the resources used to construct this place; the money, talent, worker hours and materials, then I think about the cost of keeping the lights running, the streets swept, the parks and gardens tended. And all for what?

Over the past few weeks, we've spoken about creation, listening to creation, about hearing God in the storm, in the rivers, in the landscape and in its people. We know from experience that people can be hard hearted. Jeremiah warned the people of Judah, heed God's word, care for each other, care for the land, care for Him but they didn't and the consequences were devastating. Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion was destroyed, they were alive but in exile and were now slaves to a foreign king, told what to do, told when and where and how...until they realise what they've lost.

We heard the Psalm, by the rivers of Babylon, we wept when we remembered Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Here is the lament, what have I done? How can it be undone?

How do we sing the Lord's song in this land? Do we lament parts of our own lives when everything around us changes or is out of our own control. We, like the Israelites, lament what is lost, long for something that no longer is, yearn to have a life that can not longer be.

In Jeremiah 33: 6 God says "Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it, I will heal my people and let them enjoy abundant peace and security... Here is God saying, I will heal this. Here is a promise of hope as God announces that he will bring about a King what will sit on the throne of David forever. Here God foretells the coming of Jesus.

As I mentioned earlier the readings are seemingly disconnected. In reality the connection is through Jesus, as the promised king to sit on the throne of David but also as guide, healer, saviour and friend.

Luke, as the author of this gospel, writes for an audience just like us – not Jewish, urban and somewhat wealthier, educated and one which is at risk of becoming complacent. His gospel has five distinct themes; it was written for gentiles, it is a gospel of prayer, a gospel of praise, reveals the Holy Spirit, it is a gospel of women and a gospel for all readers.

Luke's reading today reminds us that we have responsibilities, we have a job to do which is in response to the grace God gives us. And that job is to find every opportunity to be kind, to not put obstacles in peoples' way, to forgive freely and generously and finally to remember that what we do here, what we take from here to out there, is what God needs us to do, it is our responsibility, it is what we do in response to kindness, being cared for and supported and being forgiven by God and by those in here.

The exiled people of Judah, forgot how to be the people of God. Today, God reminds us all.

Lament is the prayer language for God's people as they live in a marred world marred. It is how we talk to God about our sorrows as we renew our hope in his sovereign care. To cry is human, but to lament is an act of faith that moves us to renew our commitment to trust in God as we navigate the brokenness of life.

Responding

Prayer for Others

Great God,
Who makes the sun to rise, and opens the heavens,
Hear the cry of the people
Who sow in hope for rain, but reap only despair,
Hear the cry of the people
Seeking shelter from the storm, their hopes and homes submerged
Hear the cry of the people.
When creation is hitting back, with rage and resistance
Hear the cry of your people
When we lose what we hold most dear – control of our own lives.
Hear the cry of your people
When life is so unfair.

Give us hope, grant us salvation,
Give us a new relationship with creation
With reverence to tend this gift from You
And say once again of the earth and all you created
It is good.

(Source: Rev. Bob Kikuyu, Christian Aid Global Theology Advisor, Nairobi, Kenya)

Offering

Loving God, You provide all we are and all we need,
Today we come bringing our gifts,
not because we must or because you need what we have,
But because You are our God and we are Your people
and we want you to know that we love and trust you
with all we are and all we have. Amen.

Sending

Sending and Blessing

Go simply, lightly, gently.
Go with obedience. Go with love.
And the blessing of God –
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever.
Amen.

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