

# Trinity 4, 2020

## Prayerful Tears

Lamentations 3:22-25

St. Andrew's – Jacksonville, OR — By Fr. Bill Baker

The book of Lamentations is a book of poetry; more accurately, it is a book of sad poetry. In Jewish worship it is read in respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, while in the Christian church it is interpreted in reference to the Passion of Christ. In either point of view, it is the sinner in the hands of God, whose sinful natures are being exposed that they might be redeemed through the unwavering love of God. It is a book of laments that understands that although discipline brings about mourning, it is our mourning, our reaction to sin, which will lead us back to God and ultimately to salvation. This process of lamenting our sins incites us to admit our shortcomings and brings us into the presence of God through prayer, where we may pray for ourselves and for our neighbors.

We read today that our Lord's compassion towards us does not fail and furthermore his compassions are made new every morning! These are not the attributes of a God afar off, but a God who desires relationship, a God whose forgiveness exceeds our ability to sin, a God whose love can change hearts, a God who wants to communion with you in your prayers. The child whose heart hears the knock of forgiveness and the call of justice, answers the door in fervent prayer. Jeremiah's laments are cries (prayers and admissions) that should bring us all to our knees because we too are experiencing cultural and political divides that promote fear over love. The sinfulness of Jeremiah's days are not more drastic than our own. We too are living in a time of laments that are reshaping the whole world. We have a viral pandemic taking lives and forcing political boundaries and a moral pandemic capitalizing on our fallen human natures. The very essence of life is taking on a new dimension where the once gray playing fields are becoming more and more defined and lines are being drawn in the sand. In our current state of affairs we would do well to heed the example of Jeremiah and pray in unison, with one heart, on a daily basis, fervently and unceasingly.

The soul that truly seeks the Lord must continue the appeal for righteousness through daily prayer because the need for discipline remains necessary while the battle rages on. A child of God searches relentlessly for the truth found within the heart of God because that is where our strength rests. And so search we must. And we see the same concern in the lament of Isaiah, *“And a voice said cry...and I said...what shall I cry?”* (Isaiah 40:6). What shall I cry indeed? When all seems lost, when life seems to be spinning out of control it is the prayers and the laments of the heart, cascading as tears, that connect most intimately with our Father in Heaven. Do your prayers cry out so fervently? Does your desire for true love reflect the grace and mercy of God’s compassion for you? This side of heaven we will never discern properly between pure and unjust motives in our prayers, for there will always be distortions that cloud our judgments. But still we must pray nevertheless, sincerely and continually. And the more we pray the more honest our prayers will become. There is nothing in all humanity so called upon by our Lord than to pray, for without prayer we deny the very intimacy brought about by our Lord’s sacrifice. Without prayer we deny the voice of the Holy Spirit working through us.

Your prayers can be simple; uncomplicated and unsophisticated...a simple voice from the heart. If you never move beyond simple prayer be assured that you have entered the very heart of God, for simple prayer is the pure prayer of the heart whereby your tears wash the very feet of Christ...tearful prayers are the perfume of saints...prayers well meant and sincere as the drawings of a child.

On the wall, next to my bed, hang the most precious pieces of art in my home. One is of a small girl in a dress standing next to a barbeque with three hamburgers on a fire hot grill and the other is a drawing of a father and daughter separated by a large heart with the words, “Dear daddy, I love you.” They are drawings created by my daughter Elizabeth, reflecting her thoughts and love to a very proud dad. Are her drawings to scale? Not even close. Do they include elaborate detail? Minimal at best. Did I pick up on the meaning? You bet I did! And they touched my heart more than any Picasso or Rembrandt ever could. As a child cannot draw a bad picture neither can you offer a bad prayer if it comes from a sincere heart.

Times are trying right now for all of us. But there is hope for those who are willing to pause in the storm and listen to the still small voice of God. You have a bible? Pick it up. Read, mark and learn the Word of God. You have 24 hours in a day? Take a few minutes and pray. Spill out your heart honestly before the Lord. No matter how bad things get, no matter how out of control life may seem, be confident and assured our God, our Lord, knows exactly what you need before you ask...but He still likes to hear your prayers no matter how simple they may be, no matter how much detail is forgotten.

In Jeremiah's words, *"The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."* Pause from the chaos. Let the Holy Spirit lead you in faith and pray from depth of your soul...for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.