

Feb 16th, 2022

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Psalms of Lament Adult Education

Opening Question:

Do you have a favorite lament Psalm? (lament theme verse anywhere in scripture?).
Lament Psalms are found more than any other type of Psalms – why is that?

Read Psalm 130 – Most well-known Psalm of lament

Form/Structure (Psalm 44 exercise):

1. Direct address to God
2. Complaint
3. Call to action
4. (optional) Thanks be to God

What is the difference between lament writing and God heckling?

- Complaint? Accusation?
- Charging God for leaving God's post?
- 'Hesed' – Steadfast/loving kindness
 - o All points to an act of love! (Fine line between love and hate)

Grief and Love

- Grief and favorite quote "What is grief, if not love persevering?" - WandaVision
- You cannot talk about grief without at the same time talk about love
- Al Manning and "It is done/Alpha Omega" and Lamenting (Brad's Story)

Jacopone Da Todi – Love

- 1200's CE a rich lawyer, convinced wife to go to tournament shortly after wedding, collapsed and killed her. She was found wearing a sackcloth, form of penitence for his sake, as he held her while she died.
- Poet who wrote about a love that wounds
- Love wounded God even!
- God became a slave to love, captivated by love for humanity

*Reading Handout – "O Love, Divine Love"

Question: Can you have love, true love, without also the cost of love?

Or put another way can you have psalms of praise without also having psalms of lament?

Loss of memory/self and lament – Psalm 31:9-17

- Dementia, Alzheimer's, and illness that takes away and robs the person
- Loved one's lamenting loss of person, while they physically remain.

- Question: Are we a collection of experiences, memories, brain synapses and relationships or is there even something that runs deeper?
- I believe Psalms & our theology say that what we are is deeper than this, we are God's creation and there is a depth to us that words simply fail to describe.
- Even when we are physically here, but mentally and/or emotionally changed/gone, we retain a divine spark/image of God – we are deeper than we realize.
- Psalms of lament remind us the person we lost is a huge loss, and yet, even though it is incredibly painful God is still there in this.

God created humans to be vice rulers over the world (part of image of God) p.51

- Project initially for angling God's image of wise and caring love into world
- Be stewards of creation
- Project tragically twisted by human arrogance and sin – Psalm 78
- Project not rescinded.
- We are still part of God's plan to reclaim that which has fallen
- Israel's Vocation - "this rescue mission was to be undertaken by a people who were themselves in sore need of the very same rescue"

Lament and Sin and Hope

- David and Bathsheba – Psalm 51 (2 Samuel 11)
- Maybe most famous story about adultery of all time
- We live with sin and lament the cost it takes on us but God has made it clear God will still work through us despite our sin (p.61)
- We live in present but when we lament we are calling the future into the present
 - o God's intended future to completely restore all of creation

Hallelujah/David's secret chord:

- "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" – 1 Samuel 16:23).
- David and Samson both found tragedy and were laid bare by consequences
- Rolling Stone Quote

"There's a blaze of light in every word; / it doesn't matter which you heard, / the holy, or the broken Hallelujah!"

"A blaze of light in every word." That's an amazing line. Every word, holy or broken – this is the fulcrum of the song as Cohen first wrote it. Like our forefathers, and the Bible heroes who formed the foundation of Western ethics and principles, we will be hurt, tested, and challenged. Love will break our hearts, music will offer solace that we may or may not hear, we will be faced with joy and with pain. But Cohen is telling us, without resorting to sentimentality, not to surrender to despair or nihilism. Critics may have fixated on the gloom and doom of his lyrics, but this is his offering of hope and perseverance in the face of a cruel world. Holy or broken, there is still hallelujah.

Resources:

- www.enterthebible.org Luther
- www.bibleodyssey.org - SBL
- "The Case for Psalms" – N.T. Wright book
- <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/89200-o-love-divine-love-why-do-you-lay-siege-to>
- <https://www.rollingstone.com/feature/how-leonard-cohens-hallelujah-brilliantly-mingled-sex-religion-194516/>