

Suggestions for your focus in lament

Day Today I lament...

- 1 ... for lost loved ones who have died this year.
- 2 ... for those who gave their lives in this pandemic serving others.
- 3 ... the devastating impact of Long-Covid on the lives of those who continue to suffer months on from their initial illness.
- 4 ... that I could not properly mourn the deaths of friends this year.
- 5 ... the loss of close contact with family and friends. The hiding of faces behind masks, the loss of touch and comfort.
- 6 ... the isolation of so many from community – those in high-rise living, farms and rural communities, those struggling home-working.
- 7 ... the distress of the vulnerable who have shielded for months and months without certainty of when their confinement will end.
- 8 ... the loss of work, income and self-esteem for those made redundant. The agony of providing for a family without work.
- 8 ... asylum seekers in Covid insecure detainment awaiting news while processes slow down. Victims of domestic abuse.
- 9 ... for frontline workers unable to take a break, covering for colleagues, looking after family, serving relentlessly.
- 10 ... for parents home-schooling, bearing the strains.
- 11 ... for some profiting whilst others are devastated in our unequal society.
- 12 ... for those who wait for delayed medical treatment.
- 13 ... for education disrupted. ...for hope lost.
- 14 ...for the times when I have not spoken out against injustice or acted to help my neighbours in ways that I could.

Lord, I weep with you for your world. Forgive me for words spoken unwisely and words unspoken. Deeds carried out hastily and kindnesses not done. Lord, in your mercy, forgive me. Lord, in your wisdom and grace, hear my lament and give me strength for another day. Amen

Lament and reflection – a year of pandemic March 2021



Waiting for sunrise, the dawn of a new day.
Slow in coming, what will it bring?
Will it herald change –
for me, for all damaged by the pandemic, for our
country, for the world?
What possibilities does it hold?
Ease for grief? New jobs?
Renewal of community?
An end to loneliness, anxiety, pain? A holiday?
There have been many new days, will this one be
different?
How do I believe? How can I grow trust?
How do I welcome this new day's promise?
God, help me, lift me as and who I am, from the
depths of darkness into the light of this new day.

There is a long tradition of lament in the bible. It is a tradition the modern church has not always maintained, one that we have perhaps needed to relearn in this pandemic year when we have witnessed such loss, such deep grief, such disturbance on a scale that most of us have not experienced before.

In his book *Neglected Nuggets of the Old Testament* David Wood reminds us that lament still exists in modern forms in society around us:

“A friends story about family problems, a new item picturing grieving communities after some tragedy, a protest march about some injustice; all fall into the category of laments.” (page 61)

These examples are witness to the deep need we have as humans to express the overwhelming emotion when things in life knock us right off our familiar course. The biblical examples are a reminder that God is with us in all times and is big enough to hear our innermost cries of grief or anger, loss or confusion.

In the bible there are many psalms of lament –around one third of psalms fit this genre. Some are individual, others communal and both these types of lament seem deeply relevant to our current time. As individuals all our lives have been disrupted, but for some the bereavements and the loss of livelihood, education, well-being and purpose have been truly devastating and permanently life-changing. As a community our understandings of who we are and what is important have been challenged and shaken in this year.

The book of Lamentations in the bible is a short collection of five songs which express the deepest grief at the loss of Jerusalem, the beloved city at the centre of Jewish faith. The first four of these Lamentation poems include elements of ‘dirge’ a form often associated with funerals or burials and again appropriate to the tragic loss of life to the Coronavirus.

Suggested bible passages...

Lamentations 3

Job 6

Psalms 44

An invitation to lament

In this season of Lent the days approaching Easter in the Christian tradition are strongly associated with the Jewish Passover and the flight of the Israelites from captivity. There are also many similarities to the observance of Ramadan by Muslims. It is a time of reflection of repentance and of grief as we look to the cross.

This year you it is a time to pour out how we feel deep inside about the year of pandemic, how it has affected us and our loved ones, our communities and our world. Lament is very personal. Let it find expression in words or music, art or sculpture, prayer or shouting, weeping or silence.

You may like to adapt the form below:

- 1 Light a candle, for in the deepest darkness a candle flame is a powerful light.
- 2 Express your lament in the way that is authentic to you
(There is not right way to lament. Choose to express your grief, anxiety, anger, frustration etc in a way that is authentic to you. It is ok to be angry with God. On the cross Christ cried out in agony ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ Mark 15: 34)

Today...I lament for lost loved ones... (see over)

- 3 You may like to end with these words
**Whatever is past, whatever is present,
whatever lies in the future
I am who I am,
complete with memories and possibility,
setbacks and abilities, regrets and hopes, unique.
Help me to make my unique contribution to a new day.**