

After Eternity in Our Hearts: Lament and Love

Now that we have considered together the implications of *Eternity In Our Hearts*, perhaps it will be beneficial to consider a few more components of life on this side of eternity. We've already been encouraged to let both longing and rejoicing move us to look up. That in all times, particularly in very hard times (and very good times!), we must learn to look up **first**, before we look out and around. We look up to the One who holds eternity in His hand, fixing our gaze on Him and letting His grace transform our fretting in to faith. We've been deeply challenged this past year, so there's relief in understanding that the grievous – within all the good God give us – is meant to stir in us the reminder that there is something more that we are being pulled towards: the reality of last things lying just beyond the vanishing point.

Let us now consider what it looks like to live practically, bound by time, redeeming the time in between the two advents. We often hear and speak of the “the kingdom now and not yet.” Meaning that Jesus brought His kingdom with Him ([Matt 12:28](#) and [Luke 17:21](#)), inaugurating (beginning) what will one day be consummated (finished). This consummation will be experienced when Christ returns and the wedding feast of the Lamb makes known the Bride. Oh, glorious day!

I've observed that most of the time when we hear of “the kingdom now and not yet” it is meant to give us the encouragement for the time to come - the not yet part – when faith becomes sight. And boy don't we need that encouragement! That day when we will behold our King, face to face. However, now I'd also like us to think about our lived experience in the kingdom NOW. So with that, let's think about what comes next. After we have lifted our eyes to God and heaven, what transpires at street level when we look *out and around*? I mean, as much as we want to spend our days *physically* looking up and fixing our eyes on Jesus, eventually, we're going to bump in to something, or someone. Today's devotional is focused on what it looks like to bump around, boots on the ground, in the lived experience of faith.

This jostling, as you know full well, can be really, really difficult. When it is, that is our opportunity to respond honestly. **I've found that we often forget that the option to honestly, and even bitterly, lament is a very good one because it allows us to speak openly and honestly about hardships and struggles.** One-third of the Psalms are Lament Psalms*, one-third of the Church's prayer and songbook. That should catch our attention! The word lament means to wail or mourn, and is a God-ward outcry that begins with our distress loudly at the forefront. In true lament, this outcry may begin as a howling at the moon, but eventually it begins to move us towards something else, or more accurately, towards Someone else. And that God-ward movement allows expectancy to enter in – to trust the One who hears us, knows our weakness, and who will restore us.

- ❖ *Psalm 103:13-14 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

The reason a lament is different from mere venting or despair is because before it's done, before it has played itself out, it has found itself centered on God. Which means, ultimately, lament is not just a verbal temper tantrum with no point of reference. In the midst of it, it becomes God-conscious. In voicing our distress, we remember to WHOM we are speaking. There's respect, honor, and a remembrance that because of who God is – His arm is not too short to save.

All of which means, lament – the act of pouring out our hearts, even over seemingly unreasonable stuff - is not a failure of faith, but an act of faith. In crying out to God we're demonstrating that we trust He's near, we trust that He inclines His ear to us, and we trust that He is for us. It's faith approaching and inviting the God who is, to shape our mind, or our hearts if you will, and reorient our spiritual sight.

The hallmark of the Lament psalms in the Bible is this:

After the psalmist pours out his heart, his distress, and weariness...he proclaims something along the lines of: But You, O Lord...

And that **“But You, O Lord” is the pivotal moment of faith overtaking fear, unbelief, and folly.** In declaring what is true about God, both from redemptive history and his own personal experience, the psalmist reminds himself that despite what he sees, the story never ends with despair. This is how we, too, move from honest lament, to – ultimately – a song of HOPE, rooted in God's power and goodness. Biblical lamentation that begins with our trial squarely at the center of everything ends by re-orienting us, provided we keep going until we get to... “But you, O Lord.”

We cry out until we reach that place where Someone else moves to center stage. Then our story becomes the story about God, and He takes His rightful place as the sovereign, but loving, ruler of all things. Here are but a few examples:

- ❖ *LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah **But you, O LORD,** are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. (Psalm 3:1-5)*
- ❖ *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet-- I can count all my bones-- they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. **But you, O LORD,** do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! (Psalm 22:14-19)*
- ❖ *Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. **But you, O LORD,** be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them! By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. (Psalm 41:9-11)*
- ❖ *God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them. **But you, O Lord,** are a God merciful and gracious, slow*

to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (Psalm 86:14-15)

The Psalms show us is that it's as we lament TO God and process our experiences WITH him, that He meets us and brings us to a faith-filled declaration that says, "But You, O Lord!"

In our next written devotional, we'll follow this meditation on how lament frees us to lives of faith, with how **love** flows from eternity in our hearts.

"Love is that gift of the spirit, above all others, which will characterize our perfected fellowship in the age to come. **This love we now enjoy, and the church on earth will be a colony of heaven, enjoying in advance the life of the age to come.**"

(George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*). Emphasis mine.

**Psalms 3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 36, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 69, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89, 120, 139, 141, 142*