

God's Gift of Lament

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 13 for our scripture reading this morning. And listen as I read God's word. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer me. O Lord, my God, give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death. My enemy will say, I have overcome him.

And my foe will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love. My heart rejoices in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me. Let's hear his word preached. Her absence is like the sky spread over everything.

[1 : 07] Her absence is like the sky spread over everything. Joy and Jack. Everyone called C.S. Lewis Jack.

When he was four years old, he definitively, and only as a four-year-old can, he said to everyone, you can call me Jack. And that's what they called him from that point on. Joy and Jack had been married for four years.

And she was just the woman for him. Jack's brother, Warren, said, Joy was the only woman whom Jack had met who had a brain which matched his own.

For 57 years, he had lived as a bachelor. 57 years, a single bachelor. And then at last, he had met a woman who he could play with, who he could spar with, who he could live with, who he found intensely interesting.

And she could understand and find him intensely enjoyable. Then her cancer came back. And she was torn from his side.

[2 : 19] And now her absence is like the sky spread over everything. He had the most unusual experience because as he penned his grief and he wrote it down, he published it as a book.

And at first, he published it anonymously because he didn't want his name attached to it because he didn't think people would take it seriously or something. But later on, he had this most unusual experience.

People started recommending his book to him and giving him his book and saying, this might really help you. I don't know how you feel about that.

So he decided he needed to put his name on it. He wrote, it doesn't really matter whether you grip the arms of the dentist's chair or let your hands lie limply on your lap.

The drill drills on. And some of you know the dentist's drill of grief. And the drill drills on.

[3 : 29] Suffering is hard. Comforting the suffering is hard, too. It really wasn't my plan to continue this theme. It wasn't even my plan to begin this theme, but here I am.

And so many of you said you appreciated last week. And I did think that there was more to say. And so this morning, I want to talk to you some more about that. And really, I want to talk to you about God's gift of lament.

Lamentation. God's gift of lament. I call it a gift because it's something that God gives us, and we desperately need it.

It's something that we desperately need while we're trudging through this world of suffering. Of course, not every day is a day of suffering, but there are days and there are weeks and there are months and there are years.

And we need words. We need examples. We need help not to escape the sorrow. No, there's not going to be escape in this life, but to get through it.

[4 : 33] So help when her absence is like the sky. It's over everything. When everything is colored by grief. So there's a whole book of the Bible called Lamentations.

The book of Psalms is full of laments. It was Israel's Old Testament songbook, and I have a feeling that many, many of those songs would not have made it into a modern hymn book.

But God knows we need it. Psalm 13 in front of us. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? Every day and every day I have sorrow in my heart.

So here's this troubled, sad, exhausted, beaten down soul pouring out his heart to the Lord.

And in his pain and in his expression, we find there are words here that we need and that we can take up and use. And so it is a gift.

[5 : 36] Now, I have three simple points this morning, and it's these. Why we need lament. How we do lament. And how we can help others to lament.

I want to connect this sermon to what we saw last week. Because suffering is hard, and so I hope to bring comfort if you are suffering. But comforting the suffering is difficult, too.

And so I hope to help both. So three points. Why we need lament. How we do lament. And what we can do to help others to lament. And so first, why we need it.

The simple answer is we need it because there is something very, very wrong in our world. There's something terribly wrong.

The whole earth is groaning. Creation is groaning. And we ourselves are groaning. Romans 8 says that the whole creation has been subjected against its will to decay.

[6 : 41] So decay is the master of creation. Decay, so to speak, is our master. So that means things are falling apart. We are falling apart. And Paul's answer in Romans 8 is not that there is an immediate answer.

When you become a Christian, it's not as if things just instantly get better. He doesn't say that. The answer he puts off, he says there is a final answer to this big, terrible problem.

But it is resurrection. It's not becoming a Christian. It's not anything that you can do in this life. It's something so beyond that.

It's resurrection. We eagerly, we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons. Now listen to what he defines that as. He says the redemption of our bodies.

The rescue, the salvation of our bodies. But meanwhile, we wait. We wait.

[7 : 44] And we suffer. But God doesn't leave us alone in it. God gives us this precious gift of lament. So body redemption is coming.

Resurrection is coming. You know, so on Good Friday, we have communion and we love to end the prayer in that time together by saying something like, but Sunday is coming.

This is it. Friday is a day of death, but Sunday is coming. Easter is coming. Well, Easter is coming, the ultimate and final Easter of all things. The old order of things will pass away. But until then, we need, we need, we need to lament.

We need to be able to process and deal with these things, with suffering, with God, to take our pain to God. And I want to say the only alternative to doing that is callous cynicism, is cold, unbelief, is a frozen heart.

You know, last month, Texas got into that deep freeze and all the windmills froze up and all the oil rigs froze up. That's what can happen to a human heart when suffering comes upon it.

[8 : 58] And so lament is God's way of releasing, of unfreezing our stuck souls.

A week or two ago, as a family, we watched the movie Signs. It came out, whatever, probably 25 years ago now, starring Mel Gibson.

And Mel Gibson plays a reverend. I'm not sure what persuasion, but everyone called him father. He wasn't really a Catholic, I don't think, so maybe an Anglican. But Mel Gibson plays this reverend whose wife was pinned to a tree in a freakish, weird accident.

It just had to happen at the split second for her to have this accident. And yet, there she was. She was pinned to a tree, and she died in front of him. And he walked away from the ministry.

It seems like his faith just dried up. And so he quit praying. He quit having anything to do with God.

[10 : 07] And again and again, he has to tell people, don't call me father. Don't call me father. I don't want to hear. I'm not going to pray for you or with you. But six months later, after her death, aliens show up, as they do in movies.

And in the third act, the aliens are now going to come. They're gathered around the house. And after they boarded up the house, they have their last supper together.

And his little children say, shouldn't we pray? And he says, no. We're never praying again. And they're crying.

And he's yelling. And he's saying, never pray. I'll never pray. You see, his heart is frozen.

Well, 20 minutes later, the aliens are now in the house. And the family is forced into the basement. And his son goes into an asthma attack. And he's holding his son in this dark basement with only a flashlight on.

[11 : 11] And his young son is gasping on his lap. And finally, the moment that we've been waiting for, for the whole movie, happens. His son is gasping.

And in anguish, he starts talking to God. And it's not pretty. It's not righteous. But he says, not again. Don't do this to me again.

Not again. I hate you. I hate you. Now, like I said, it's not good. It's even sinful. But the dam broke.

His heart was unfrozen. His tongue was unfrozen. And at last he was speaking. And then he says this to us. He starts talking to his son.

Believe. Believe. Believe it's going to pass. The air is coming. There's nothing to be afraid of. Here comes the air. Here comes the air together.

[12 : 13] Together, the air is going into our lungs. We're the same. We're the same. You get it. Unbelief is not connecting to God.

Not praying to God in your pain. Afraid to breathe out to God. That's what you're left with. If you don't have lament. If you don't lament.

Sorrow and pain will suffocate you. It will be a pillow over your face. Or asthma in your lungs. And so, now, in prayer we shouldn't ever say that we hate God.

But in the movie, it was the first time in six months that he had said anything to God. That he had even acknowledged God's existence. And as he talked, as he reached out into, in his pain, air rushed into his soul.

Spiritual air rushed in. And suddenly, everything began to change. He started to see things differently. He started to see, instead of cold, callous, God absent and far away, he started to see signs that God was present.

[13 : 29] God was helping. God was there. There was a purpose and care behind everything. And that's why we need lament. Because that's the only way we can see clearly. We can see God clearly in our pain.

Our pain, our suffering, our grief will blind us to who God is and what he is doing. And lament is the only way we can see clearly. And that's why we sing songs of lament sometimes in the public worship.

You know, there are days, and I'm sure there are, that you come here on Sunday and you're hoping that we'll sing happy songs. That's the mood you're in and you're feeling happy. And then we sing sad songs.

At least a couple of them, maybe. And I hope you realize that there is a purpose for that. We're not giving up hope. We're not believing. But people need to deal with God in pain.

And people need to deal with God in pain together with you. Weep with those who weep. Mourn with those who mourn. We need to mourn with them.

[14 : 43] And so, again, we're not trying to be depressing. We're not giving in to unbelief. Heaven will be a place of endless joy. Heaven will be a never-ending sunny day of happiness. But it's not here.

We're not there yet. The sunshine and the clouds are mixed together. And so they're mixed together in our worship. There's a whole book.

The Book of Lamentation was written for the whole community to lament together. Because we were never, ever, ever meant to go through grief and suffering by ourselves. It was always something that we were meant to do with each other.

And so, we tend to think that we should always be happy and full of joy and optimistic. But if we're not feeling it, we're supposed to fake it until we make it.

But that idea is foreign to the Bible. God never says that. The Bible gives us voice and language when that's what's on our hearts.

[15 : 49] Psalm 88, your wrath has swept over me. Your terrors have destroyed me. All day long, they surround me like a flood.

God, they've completely engulfed me. You have taken away from me my friend and my neighbor. Darkness is my closest friend. Period.

Full stop. That's how the psalm ends. And the psalm is there because there are days when we need to say something like that to God. So, God doesn't pull a rabbit out of his magic hat and bring joy out of all this darkness in a moment.

He says it is dark, but I'm going to give you words to speak. It's dark and I'm going to give you what you need to say. So, weeping lasts for a night. Joy comes in the morning.

I think too often we forget that sometimes weeping lasts for the night. And we are in the night and it's time for weeping. And so, if you're suffering, don't hold your breath.

[16 : 52] Don't hold your breath. Lament. Grieve before God. Don't keep it in. Don't fake it. Don't tough it out.

Don't wait until you're feeling the way that you're supposed to feel. Pour your heart out to him. If you're heart sick. If you're heart sick.

Know that the Lord, like a father, has compassion on his children. There has never been a halfway decent father that has looked upon their sick child and not had some compassion for him.

And so, talk to him. Tell him where it hurts. Tell him everything. That's what you need. And that's what God gives you. So, that's why we need lament. Now, number two is how to lament.

How to lament. And this is where we're going to look at Psalm 13. We're not going to look at it in great, great detail. But Psalm 13 puts all of it together in a very brief, condensed package.

[17 : 54] It has all the essential parts in six verses. So, three basic steps. How to lament. So, you're feeling this way.

What does God invite you to do? What does God give you to do? Three basic steps. Tell God how you feel. That's simple. Tell God how you feel.

Look at Psalm 13. How does the psalmist feel? We're not left to guess. We're not left to read between the lines. He tells us. He feels forgotten.

He's not telling God some theological truth. This is important for us to realize and understand. He's not telling God theological truth. He isn't forgotten. I think sometimes we think we need to tell God what we're supposed to be feeling or how we feel like.

But what we feel like we can't say anything about until we're feeling what we're supposed to be feeling. But David doesn't do that. He says, will you forget me forever? He's expressing how he feels.

[19 : 00] Not the reality. Just what it seems. What David is going through. He feels forgotten. He feels like God is hiding from him. That I can't find you.

I'm looking. But you're hiding your face from me. You're not listening to me. You shut the door in my face and you bolted it close and I can't get in. This is how I feel.

There's this distance. And it seems as if you don't care. He says he's exhausted with endless thinking. Wrestling with his thoughts.

I think the ESV says something like, how long must I take counsel in my thoughts? How long do I have to gather all my thoughts together? And let's hash this out. And let's talk it out.

And let's talk it out. And let's talk it out. And hash it out. And let's wrestle through this again. And when we're done wrestling, let's just start all over again. Around and around we go. Wrestling, if you've ever done it in real life, not WWE wrestling, but real wrestling, it feels like eternity when you're on the mat.

[20 : 18] Straining every moment in three minutes feels like forever when you're wrestling. And that's what he's saying. David is saying, I can't pin my thoughts down.

I can't wrestle them under control. They go away and I have to bring them back and drag them back kicking and screaming. And my heart won't be comforted.

It's like getting on a horse that's just not going to be tamed. And you try to tame it and it just bucks you off. And so David's saying, I'm bruised. I'm exhausted.

This battle will not stop. It's endless. He says, it's never ending sorrow. Every day have sorrow in my heart.

There are times when the grief is not temporary. I mean, it's it just feels like it's it's what's tomorrow. What's on tomorrow's agenda?

[21 : 17] It's sorrow. And what's on the next day's agenda? It's sorrow. And you pull up Google Calendar and every day it's the same day. Grief and sorrow is going to be on the schedule. And he said, that's how I feel.

There's no break. You know how exhausted it is when you just are grieving. So C.S. Lewis put it like I've already quoted the drill drills on.

So grieving and suffering, it often goes in cycles. When you think you're done, you begin again.

You think you're rising above it and it comes back. You think you've reached some sort of epiphany with it. You've accomplished something or gone somewhere or whatever, but you begin again.

Again, C.S. Lewis writes, for in grief, nothing stays put. So you're trying to put things where they go, but things just keep falling off the shelf.

[22 : 24] And so you put them back and they fall off. One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always reoccurs. Round and round, everything repeats. Am I going in circles or dare I hope that I'm going in a spiral?

And if I'm going in a spiral, am I going up or am I going down? How does David feel?

My enemy is winning over me. I cannot win. Everything I do, everything I try, it's a failure.

I can't escape. I just go from loss to loss, from fear to fear. How long will my enemy triumph over me? Now, what is that?

Is that David not living on the Lord, not trusting in the Lord? Is that David failing to believe? No, that's what faith looks like when it's walking in pain.

[23 : 28] It's talking to God about what's going on. It's not pretending. There's no waiting. It's casting your anxieties and your cares on the Lord.

It's casting them on, throwing them on him. And so, to live, to tell him, tell him, this is how I feel.

Maybe it's not all true. I understand that. Maybe it's not all right. But here it is in all honesty. Again, I want to make this clear.

There is a lot of people saying that we should rage against God and things like that. That's not what I'm saying. But there is a far difference between just raging at God and being honest about how you feel.

So, how to lament? You tell him how you feel. Number two, second step is ask for help. You ask for help. Look on me and answer. Oh, Lord, my God.

[24 : 40] Give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death. So, don't hide your eyes anymore. Don't hide your face anymore. Give me the light of your countenance. Give me, let me see your face.

Let me see that you're paying attention to me. I'm here in this cave. I'm in this cave of suffering, in this grief. Turn on the lights. Have you ever been in a mammoth cave and you're way down like 100 and whatever feet underneath the ground and they turn off all the lights?

That's what David is saying. Please turn on the lights. Psalm 142. Here's another lament. He says, no one cares for my life. I have no refuge. What a despairing thing to say.

No one cares for my life. I look around and there's no one. But then he says, he turns to God. Rescue me.

They are too strong for me. Set me free that I might praise you. So, brothers and sisters, that's a child's cry. Turn on the lights for me.

[25 : 41] So, be your father's daughter. Be your father's son. And ask for help.

Number three, step three is choose to trust. You choose to trust. Are we such Calvinists that we don't think that there is a place for choosing to trust?

I hope not. That's not the real kind of Calvinism. Choosing to trust. You see this again and again. You ask God for help. You tell him how you feel. You ask him for help.

And then you choose. You exercise faith. Psalm 142 is another lament. He says, you are my refuge. Here he is at the end. You are my refuge.

You are my portion in the land of the living. What he's saying is, I'm going to turn away from everything else. And I'm going to focus my attention on you. And I'm going to take you as my portion.

[26 : 41] I'm going to take you. And I'm going to have you. Psalm 42 and Psalm 43. Probably originally they were meant to go together. Somewhere along the line they got split up.

But again and again the refrain is, I will yet praise him. It's all bad, bad, bad. But I will yet praise him. I will yet praise him.

There's going to be another side to this. And I'm choosing. I'm looking to the other side. And I'm saying, I know my God is going to help me. And on the other side of this, I will praise him.

I will praise him because he'll take care of me. And he'll rescue me. And he'll help me. That's what trust is. That's what faith is. The Lord is going to lead me to the other side. This isn't going to end in grief. This is going to end in my redemption and my rescue.

And I will praise him with joy. Psalm 55. This psalm is another lament. And the psalmist feels attacked.

[27 : 39] He feels like he's living in a war zone. He says destructive forces are at work in the streets. So out there in the streets.

Destroyers roaming around. And David says, even my friends, even friends are turning against each other. But Psalm 55 ends with cast your cares on the Lord.

Because he will sustain you. And David says, that's all that's going on. This is how I feel. This is what I see out there. But I'm going to cast it all in the Lord. And he's going to sustain me.

He will never let the righteous fall. But God, you will bring down the wicked. But as for me, I will trust you. That's resolve. That's resolution. That's choosing to trust.

To say, Lord, yes, all this is going on out there. But I believe you are just. And you are going to exercise that justice. And you are going to deliver me. And so nothing at this point has changed in Psalm 55.

[28 : 46] Nothing has changed. But he's told God how he felt. He's asked for help. And now he's choosing to trust. So Psalm 13 in front of you. Verse 5. But I trust in your unfailing love.

Your covenant faithfulness. Your I am that I am. I am for you. I'm going to be your rescuer. I'm going to deliver you. I love you. And I've loved you forever. And I will love you to the very ever, ever, ever, never ending.

I will love you. And he says, my heart rejoices in your salvation. Not that that salvation has happened yet. But his heart is already rejoicing. Because he knows that salvation is coming.

I will sing to the Lord. For he has been good to me. So he's choosing to trust. Now what does that feel like? So I'm telling you. Yeah, you have to choose to trust. But what does that feel like?

What is that? What am I saying there? Well, you leave it with him. To cast your cares on the Lord is you leave it with him.

[29 : 50] And so you go to the hardware store. And you're with your dad. And your dad's doing some sort of concrete project. And you're carrying that 90-pound bag of concrete.

And it's heavy. You know what trusting is? It's giving that concrete to your father and letting him carry it. And then you just go like this.

And you walk along beside him. That's faith. That's saving faith. That's saving faith. That's faith what it looks like the very first time. God awakens you to your guilt and to your condemnation.

That you are not right with him. You've done evil. You are in trouble. You are in danger. He wakes you up to your condemnation before him. And then what do you do in faith?

You put your sin on Jesus. You put your sin on the cross. You nail it up there for him to deal with. And that's it. That's it. You take it.

[30 : 56] You give it to him. You put it into his hands. And that's saving faith. You give yourself to Jesus. You really say, Jesus, you came and died to save sinners.

I am a sinner. Now do what you said. Save me. I'm your problem. Save me.

That's saving faith. And isn't there such joy in believing that and understanding that for the very first time? That God isn't asking you to somehow carry these sins.

He's not asking you to figure out how to deal with them. He's not asking you to feel such and such a way. He's just simply leaving it on Jesus.

From sin and self to cease. To just stop. And just leave it all on him. That's faith. And that's choosing to trust.

[31 : 55] Now, that's what God is inviting us to do. That's how the Christian life begins. And that's how it goes on. Wouldn't that be nice? If we really believe that. Wouldn't that be nice that that works somehow in real life?

Like, you got a bill in the mail. So you walk out to your mailbox. In my house, in my neighborhood, there's my neighbor's mailboxes are right next to mine.

So there's three mailboxes in a row. And wouldn't it be nice if I opened up my mailbox and looked? And there's my NIPSCO bill. And it's \$400 or whatever it is for gas this month.

And I look at it. But my neighbor Joe, that's really his name, Joe, says, you know what? Anytime you have a bill, you can just put it into my mailbox and I'll pay for it.

And so there's my NIPSCO bill. There it is. It's way a lot. And I just move over one step, open up his mailbox and stick it in there. And that's his business.

[32 : 53] And that's his problem now. That's what saving faith is. That's what believing is. And that's really what lament is. You tell God how you feel. You ask him for help. And then you leave it in his hands to take care of.

And that's how we walk home in this world of suffering. His door is open. His heart is open.

His ears are open. And so don't be silent. Don't hold your breath. Now, our third point this morning is this.

Suffering is hard. And helping the suffering is hard, too. So how can we help our brothers and sisters to lament? How can we help them to use this gift?

Well, it's clear we can't do any of those last three things for them so much. We can't tell God how they feel like they can.

[34 : 03] We can't ask for help. We can't choose to trust for them so much. We can't believe for them. We can only do so much to take away their pain.

We can't do so much to do. We can't do so much to do. We can't do so much to do. But lamenting is something that we can do together. Weeping with those who weep.

Mourning with those who mourn means lamenting with those who lament. Maybe another way of saying all this is what could have Job's friends done?

We know what they did. But what could they have done? You know, I wonder what they would have done if they could just turn back time and show up on Job's doorstep again and done it all over again.

So what can we do? How can we help our brothers and sisters to lament, to deal with their grief and their pain and their suffering before God?

[35 : 03] I just have some very practical suggestions to help our suffering friends. One, you can speak for them.

Now, as I said, you can't take the place of their words directly. But sometimes it is hard for them to find words to say.

Sometimes our hearts are frozen in pain and grief and doubt and confusion. And so what can we do to help them? Do you just leave them?

Just like wait for them to thaw out all on their own? No, you listen. You listen to them. Lamenting, helping your brother or sister lament, it begins with listening.

And then you lament for them. You listen and then you pray with them. You pray with them in their presence. You pray so that they can hear you. Yes, it's good to pray on your own for them.

[36 : 05] But I'm talking about you're there with them. They've expressed their pain. You've listened to them. And now you turn to God and you pray with them. And you express their pain, their confusion, their doubt for them.

I'm not telling you to do anything that Jesus himself doesn't do. He's our high priest. And as a priest, he carries the pain, the pains and the sorrows and the sins of all of his people on his own heart.

And, you know, it's not just him that's a priest. Peter says we've also been called to be priests. And this is part of the way that we act as priests toward each other.

This is part of our priestly role when our brother is suffering. You carry their hurt to God for them and with them. So in their hearing and their hearing with them, you lament.

You tell God their sorrows and you call out for help and you speak words of trust. For them. Another thing.

[37 : 15] Simply reading a psalm of lament with them can help. Just reading to them can help. Because real acute suffering, it takes a lot of energy just to handle.

It takes a lot of mental energy and self-control. You know, you're just all of your strength is being harnessed to just survive. And so it can really be helpful for someone to sort of, so to speak, lend their mental energy to you and read for you.

To let God's words wash over you. To hear it coming from someone else's mouth and brain other than yours. So comforters.

You don't have to come up with your own words. You don't have to come up with some words that make it all better. Pick a psalm of lament. And read it to them. And read as well as you can.

Read slowly. Read heartfelt. How can you help people lament? You can stick with them when it gets messy.

[38 : 31] Stick with them when it gets messy. We're sufferers and we're sinners. And we never suffer without our sin in this world. And we never sin without suffering in this world.

And so people sin and they're suffering. So people do have raw, unfiltered, unvarnished, impolite emotions in their suffering.

And so it's not a time to be afraid to sit in a mess. That's what Jesus did. He came down into our mess. He wasn't for polite society.

He was for this mess of a world that we're living in. And so it's not a time to be afraid to sit in a mess. It's not a time to correct every flaw. It's not a time to... It is a time to love them with lots and lots of grace and patience and kindness and forbearance.

It's time to stick with them when they are expressing things that might not be perfectly true or perfectly accurate, but yet they're trying to be honest.

[39 : 36] So C.S. Lewis, again, I'm going to give you sort of a long quote, but the point here is when people are saying things like this, you need to be ready for that and not put off and not frustrated and not exasperated with them.

He said this, Talk to me about the truth of religion and I'll listen gladly. Talk to me about the duty of religion and I'll listen submissively. But don't come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect you don't know, you don't understand.

When you're happy, so happy you have no sense of needing God, so happy that you're tempted to feel his claims upon you as an interruption.

If you remember yourself and you turn to him with gratitude and praise, you will be, or so it feels, welcomed with open arms.

But go to him when your need is desperate and when all other help is in vain. And what do you find? A door slammed in your face and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside and after that, silence.

[40 : 56] Again, I want you to be crystal clear. The point is not that that is true. But that is someone being honest.

And we have to be prepared. And we have to be ready for anger and for confusion and for doubt. So when they are in Psalm 88 and they're saying, darkness is my only friend, don't prove them right.

Stay. Stay. How can you help them lament? You can gently open the doors of faith.

You can't force them to walk through. You can't force people to eat. You can't force them to believe. But you certainly can open the door and send the invitation to evoke, invoke faith.

How do you do that? It can be very simple. You can read a promise. Isaiah 41.10, Do not fear, for I am with you. Psalm 23, When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

[42 : 17] Psalm 34.18, The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Again, do you see, when someone is feeling like the door is double bolted and there's nothing but silence, you can give them that promise.

And again, you can't force them to believe it, but you certainly can put it on the table and encourage them to believe it. Hebrews 13.5, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Again, you can't make them take comfort in the God's promises. But you can invite them. And these invitations are not shouts, they're not commands, they're not angry words, they're whispers, they're doors left open, they're food left on the table, and you pray that they'll eat it.

So, that's how we can help. I guess, here as we end, I just want you to realize and understand, and maybe you already do, but we are called to be instruments in the Redeemer's hands.

Paul Tripp has a book by that title, and that's what we're called to be. We're called to be instruments in the Redeemer's hands. God is going to do, He is the Redeemer, but He uses people.

[43 : 37] He uses us. And so, we're meant to help each other get, get to that land where there's now no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things that's passed away.

We are going there, but how we get there, this is one of the ways is we walk arm in arm with our brothers and sisters, and that's what this is about. Lamenting together is traveling together.

It's traveling together. And so, brothers and sisters, let's keep traveling together as the family of God. Let's keep traveling together. Let's stick with each other in suffering to commit to each other that, you know what?

I do love you. And I'm going to be here with you. And sometimes, you're not going to be the perfect, pleasant person to be around, full of faith and hope and joy, but I'm going to be here with you no matter what.

Because that's what Jesus has promised us, and so that's what we can do for each other. Well, let's pray. Our good God, we thank you that you are full of grace and truth.

[44 : 49] and when we are hurting and broken and confused and in pain, you don't leave us. And you just don't give us these commands and say, you need to just do this.

But you give us help and you give us pity and you give us strength to trust, to obey, to keep walking in the pain.

And so, I pray for us as a church body, as a church family, help us to have more of the eyes of Jesus ready and willing, even willing, to look and to see the suffering of others.

to be curious about them, to be concerned about them, to love them enough to know them and to draw close to them.

Give us courage. Give us courage for those moments when it would just be so much easier to walk away.

[46 : 00] Help us to love each other more than that. thank you, Lord Jesus, for the gift of the Holy Spirit that you are making us like you in our thoughts and our feelings and in our actions.

And so, I pray that we would act like you act towards those who are suffering, that you would help us to be more and more like you. And I want to pray especially for my brothers or sisters who are suffering and maybe it's a wound that they've carried for years and years.

and the cycle comes up and it goes around and around again and again. Lord Jesus, be their rock to hold them up, be their rock to overshadow them, be their shepherd to guide them.

And I pray that they would know that they are loved not only by you but by us. I pray this in Jesus' name for his sake. Amen. Amen.