

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 15 November 2020

Sermon Title : The Seedbed of Hope

Speaker : Rev Peter Koh

Text : Lamentations 3:22-33

INTRODUCTION

What is the difference between “complaint” and “lament”? Complaints are often voiced to people around us, and they arise when we perceive that our rights have been taken away. They are focused on what others have done wrong to us. Laments are focused on expressing our concerns to God while embracing our pain in the truth of who God is. We see an example of what lamenting looks like through the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, the author of the book of Lamentations. How then can we find hope in our trials and persecutions?

Context:

In the book of Lamentations, we see that the first temple in Jerusalem and Judah were destroyed. In chapters 1 & 2, the prophet cries and weeps over the nation. However, in chapter 3 he starts to recall the goodness of God and through that he finds hope.

This shows us that in our trials and persecutions, we can find hope in God. We need to learn to bring our laments and not complaints to God. As Christians, we need to heed Paul’s teaching in Philippians 2:14-16, to do everything without complaining or grumbling, so that we may present ourselves blameless before God.

1. Look Up to God (vv.22-24) – Bring our pains to God

How often do we look up and see who God is when we go through difficult times? When we look up to God, we see His faithfulness and steadfast love. Both the love of God and His mercy is never ending and eternal. Even though we deserve to be punished, God does not withhold His love and mercy. The prophet Jeremiah looked to God and saw a God of hope and not of destruction. Even though the Israelites deserved punishment for their disobedience, as Jeremiah embraced the pain and acknowledged the mercy and faithfulness of God, it gave him hope.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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When we look up to God:

- We can draw strength as we know that He cares for us.
- We understand that the consequences of sin bring pain, but it is meant to teach and discipline us, so that we will not go astray again and live a life that is upright. When God disciplines us, there will be healing and restoration as it brings us into His perfect will. God allows it to mould and shape us into His image.
- We recall His character and goodness.

2. Look beyond in Lament (vv.25-33) – Bear our pains in the truth of who God is

We also need to look beyond our lament because what God is allowing us to go through is only temporal and not permanent. As we learn to be still and seek God's face, we find that in the midst of silence and unanswered prayer, God is inviting us to commune and communicate with Him.

When we look beyond in lament:

- We wait on God who is good – trust that God will hear us and minister to us. We can bear our pain in the truth of who God is, because He understands. We can also persevere because we see that:
 - God is faithful in reminding/warning us of what He would do if we stray away from Him
 - God is faithful to love and show mercy to those who repent
 - God is not willing to afflict His loved ones
- We count on God who is able to deliver us. (v.26)
- It helps us to understand His purpose in our lives.

During this difficult period, are we complaining or lamenting to God? When we look up and look beyond in lament, we can also embrace the consequences of our wrongdoings as He strengthens us and allows us to have hope. In Luke 15, we see that when the prodigal son was in the pit of depression, he came to his senses as he reflected upon the goodness of his father. This was the mark of repentance and was the point at which he decided he would return to his father. When he returned, his father embraced him, restored him and celebrated his return. In the same way God will accept us and embrace us if we return to Him, as He loves us. He invites all who are weary and heavy laden to find rest in Him.

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CONCLUSION

Everything God does is based on His covenant love with us and He does it with the purpose of bringing us into His Kingdom. God invites us to come into His community and to be part of His family so His Kingdom will be established here on earth as it is in heaven.

In spite of what we are going through, God's covenant love with us is not broken even though we may have broken our part of this covenant with Him. He has kept His covenant and His covenant love with us in order to bring us into His family. Let us accept God's invitation into His family by going to Him in lament instead of complain, and look beyond in lament to God.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Lamentations 3:23-33 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, 'This is the Word of the Lord.'

All to respond, "Thanks be to God." Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now."

- a.
 - (i) As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?
 - (ii) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon "The Seedbed of Hope"?

- b. How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. Why is it important to understand the difference between lament and complaint?
- 2b. How can “looking up to God” by bringing your pains to Him help you better cope with them?
- 2c. Everything God does is based on His covenant love with us and He does with the purpose of bringing us into His Kingdom.
Why is it necessary to “look beyond in lament” by bearing your pains in the truth of who God is, besides “looking up to God”?
- 3a. (i) Are you someone who often complains?
(ii) How can you turn your complaints into laments?
- 3b. (i) What is a pain that you are lamenting to God at this season of your life?
(ii) Do you find it a challenge to “look up to God” or “look beyond in lament to God”?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to “look up to God” and “look beyond in lament” in times of pain?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on how by the Holy Spirit's enablement, you were able to (i) wait on God who is good, (ii) count on God who is able to deliver you and (iii) understand God's purpose through a pain in your life.

OR

Give thanks to God for His faithfulness, goodness, love and mercy you experience when you bring your pains to Him.

5. Commit all that have been shared in 3a, 3b and 3c to God, asking for His Holy Spirit's leading and empowerment to follow through what you and your group have committed to do in the following week(s), until your next meeting.

As a group, take time to pray for each other, seeking the Holy Spirit's strength and grace to be able to look up and beyond lament to God in this uncertain time as the world battles COVID-19 and its effects. Ask for God's wisdom and revelation even when you go through pain so you may continue to trust in His purpose of establishing you in His Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

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