



A Liturgy of Lament

Pray:

Father in heaven, our hearts are heavy and our tongues fumble to describe the pain we feel. But we call upon You because You are the one true God and you are our God. We trust that You hear us whether by morning or night.

Father, we confess that You are the God of justice. You hate wickedness and evil. You bring low the proud and You shut the mouths of liars. Because of Your justice, we hope in You.

Father, we also humble ourselves before You because we are debtors to Your grace. There is nothing great in us. Everything that we are is because of Your goodness and mercy. Lead us further into truth and justice. Apart from You, our ways are not straight.

As for unjust people, their words cannot be trusted. Though they speak alluring words, their tongue is a sharp fang. Their actions are led by injustice and they ultimately rebel against You.

So, Father, put an end to their evil and injustice. Make right what was taken away. Restore those who have been robbed. May Your justice prevail. Keep not silent, O Lord. For we take refuge in You. You are our hope. Justice is hard to come by among humans. But with You, the innocent will be covered. With You, those who trust in You will be protected. You are our hope. Amen.

--A Prayer by the Asian American Christian Collaborative

Read:

Psalms 13 NIV

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me.

Read:

Isaiah 58:1-12 NIV

"Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.

‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ “

Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.

Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Read:

Joel 2:12-13 NIV

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Read:

Amos 5 NIV

Hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you: “Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again, deserted in her own land, with no one to lift her up.”

This is what the Sovereign Lord says to Israel: “Your city that marches out a thousand strong will have only a hundred left; your town that marches out a hundred strong will have only ten left.”

This is what the Lord says to Israel: “Seek me and live; do not seek Bethel, do not go to Gilgal, do not journey to Beersheba. For Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing.” Seek the Lord and live, or he will sweep

through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them, and Bethel will have no one to quench it. There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.

He who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns midnight into dawn and darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the Lord is his name. With a blinding flash he destroys the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin.

There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth. You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts. Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil.

Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

Therefore this is what the Lord, the Lord God Almighty, says: “There will be wailing in all the streets and cries of anguish in every public square. The farmers will be summoned to weep and the mourners to wail. There will be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through your midst,” says the Lord.

Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light—pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

“Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel? You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god—which you made for yourselves.

Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the Lord, whose name is God Almighty.

Read:

Luke 4:16-21 NIV

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll

of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Pray:

Lord, come into our brokenness and our lives with your love that heals all. Consume our pride and replace it with humility and vulnerability. Allow us to make space for your correction and redemption. Allow us to bow down with humble hearts, hearts of repentance. Bind us together in true unity and restoration. May we hear your voice within the words of these pages. Give us collective eyes to see our role in repairing what has been broken. Allow these words to be a conduit for personal transformation that would lead to collective reproduction. --Latasha Morrison

Closing Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Listen:

Dee Wilson, *Rose Petals*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-3KikfQo_E

Urban Doxology, *God Not Guns*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtI2ugNcFfk>