

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2022

PSALMS OF LAMENT

PSALM 6

TODAY, WE LOOK AT PSALM 6, ONE OF 7 PSALMS OF LAMENT SUNG BY ISRAEL AND THE EARLY CHURCH ON ASH WEDNESDAY. ALL 7 PSALMS WERE SUNG AT THE BEGINNING OF LENT TO REMIND US OF OUR SINFULNESS AND NEED TO RELY WHOLLY ON GOD.

HOWEVER, GOD IS DISCIPLINING DAVID FOR THE SIN OF HIS LIFE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE HERE THAT NOT ALL SITUATIONS OF SUFFERING ARE THE DISCIPLINING HAND OF GOD. BUT WHEN GOD DOES DISCIPLINE YOU, PSALM 6 IS A MODEL OF HOW TO RESPOND.

PSALM 6 IS DIVIDED INTO 4 PARTS, AND WE WILL LOOK AT EACH SECTION STARTING WITH VERSES 1-3 WHICH IS ALL ABOUT THE STRUGGLE DAVID HAS.

DON'T YOU GET THE UNDERSTANDING HERE THAT DAVID IS IN EXTREME SPIRITUAL ANGUISH – SO MUCH SO, THAT IT IS AFFECTING HIM PHYSICALLY. HE'S STRUGGLING IN ANGUISH OVER HIS LIFE, AND WHILE DAVID DOESN'T SPECIFICALLY CONFESS ANY SIN, OR EVEN DECLARE HIS INNOCENCE IN THIS PSALM, WE KNOW THERE ARE PLENTY OF THINGS FROM HIS PAST THAT WOULD CAUSE HIM GRIEF.

DAVID KNOWS THAT A HOLY GOD DOESN'T TOLERATE SIN. HE KNOWS THAT IF GOD WERE TO GIVE HIM WHAT HE TRULY DESERVES, IT WOULD COST HIM HIS VERY LIFE.

AND SO, IN VERSE 2, HE HAS COME TO REALIZE HE NEEDS GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY.

NOTICE HERE, THAT DAVID DOESN'T EXPECT GOD TO ACT UNJUSTLY – HE'S NOT ASKING GOD TO WITHHOLD PUNISHMENT, BECAUSE HE REALIZES THAT HE DESERVES TO BE DISCIPLINED. SO HE SAYS, "DON'T REBUKE ME IN YOUR ANGER, DON'T DISCIPLINE ME IN YOUR WRATH." IN OTHER WORDS, HE DOESN'T WANT GOD TO COMPLETELY FORGO JUDGEMENT, HE JUST WANTS THE JUDGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE TO BE TEMPERED WITH GOD'S MERCY.

GUILT IS LIKE A CHECK-ENGINE IN YOUR CAR – YOU CAN EITHER STOP AND DEAL WITH THE ISSUE AT HAND OR IGNORE IT AND FACE MUCH MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS DOWN THE ROAD.

DAVID WAS EXPERIENCING GUILT OVER HIS SINFUL LIFE AND HE DOESN'T IGNORE IT – HE ADDRESSES IT HEAD ON.

A LITTLE BOY WAS VISITING HIS GRANDPARENTS AND THEY GAVE HIM HIS FIRST SLING-SHOT. HE PRACTICED IN THE WOODS BUT COULD NEVER HIT HIS TARGET.

AS HE CAME BACK TO THE YARD BEHIND HIS GRANDPARENTS HOUSE, HE SPIED GRANDMA'S PET DUCK, AND ON IMPULSE, HE TOOK AIM AND LET FLY. THE STONE HIT AND THE DUCK FELL DEAD.

THE BOY PANICKED AND HID THE DUCK IN THE WOODPILE, ONLY TO LOOK UP AND SEE HIS SISTER WATCHING HIS EVERY MOVE. SHE HAD SEEN IT ALL BUT SAID NOTHING.

AFTER LUNCH THAT DAY, GRANDMA ASKED THE SISTER TO HELP WITH THE DISHES BUT SHE SAID, "BROTHER TOLD ME HE WANTED TO HELP IN THE KITCHEN TODAY, DIDN'T YOU BROTHER?" AND SHE WHISPERED TO HIM, "REMEMBER THE DUCK." SO, BROTHER DID THE DISHES.

LATER, GRANDPA ASKED IF THE CHILDREN WANTED TO GO FISHING, BUT GRANDMA SAID, "I'M SORRY, BUT I NEED SISTER TO HELP MAKE SUPPER." SISTER SMILED AND SAID, "THAT'S ALL TAKEN CARE OF. BROTHER WANTS TO DO IT." AND AGAIN, SHE WHISPERED, "REMEMBER THE DUCK."

SO BROTHER STAYED WHILE SISTER WENT FISHING.

AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF BROTHER DOING BOTH HIS AND SISTER'S CHORES, HE COULD STAND IT NO LONGER. HE CONFESSED TO GRANDMA THAT HE HAD KILLED THE DUCK.

"I KNOW", GRANDMA SAID, GIVING HIM A BIG HUG. "I WAS STANDING AT THE KITCHEN WINDOW AND SAW THE WHOLE THING. BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, I FORGAVE YOU. I WONDERED HOW LONG YOU WOULD LET SISTER MAKE A SLAVE OF YOU."

ISN'T THAT WHAT WE DO WITH SIN? WE LET IT MAKE A SLAVE OF US, BECAUSE WE FORGET THAT GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT IT ALREADY – AND HE IS QUICK TO FORGIVE WHEN WE REPENT. WE CARRY AROUND GUILT FOR WHAT WE HAVE DONE, ENSLAVING OURSELVES TO THE VERY THING GOD HAS ALREADY FORGIVEN.

DAVID'S SOUL IS IN ANGUISH – STRUCK WITH TERROR BECAUSE OF HIS SIN, AND HE ASKS – HOW LONG WILL THIS GO ON?

IN VERSES 4-5, NOTICE THAT DAVID DOESN'T GIVE UP – HE CLOINGS TO THE HOPE THAT GOD WILL HEAR HIS CRY AND BRING ABOUT DELIVERANCE.

HE SAYS “TURN O LORD AND DELIVER ME”. TO TURN IS REGULARLY USED TO DESCRIBE A CHANGE OF ACTION OR DIRECTION – THE PROPHETS FREQUENTLY USED THE TERM AS A CALL TO REPENTANCE.

ISRAEL EXPERIENCED THAT THE MERCY OF GOD COULD LEAD GOD TO RESPOND TO HUMAN REPENTANCE BY REVOKING A PREVIOUS JUDGEMENT – AND SO DAVID BEGS HIM TO TURN FROM HIS LONG INACTIVITY AND ACT GRACIOUSLY TO SAVE HIM.

HE ACTUALLY BASES HIS PLEA FOR DIVINE ACTION IN THE MERCIFUL NATURE OF GOD AND HIS UNFAILING LOVE. DAVID'S NEED IS DISPLAYED FOR ALL TO SEE, BUT HE IS DESPERATE FOR GOD TO ACT ON HIS BEHALF.

AND SO, HE TRIES A DRAMATIC STRATEGY TO MOTIVATE GOD TO ACT.

HE BASICALLY SAYS, “IF GOD CONTINUES TO FORGET THE FAITHFUL IN THIS LIFE, THERE WILL BE NO ONE LEFT ABOVE GROUND TO PRAISE HIM.” DAVID IS FEELING FORGOTTEN BY GOD AND FEELS THREATENED BY DEATH.

VERSES 6-7 PAINT AN EVEN MORE DRAMATIC SCENE AS DAVID SAYS, “I AM WORN OUT FROM GROANING, I FLOOD MY BED WITH WEEPING, I DRENCH MY COUCH WITH TEARS.” THIS IS THE SUFFERING THAT TORMENTS DAVID – WEEPING AND TEARS DOMINATE THE NIGHT HOURS. SUCH BOUTS OF RESTLESS, UNCONTROLLABLE WEEPING ARE OFTEN THE END RESULT OF PHYSICAL EXHAUSTION AND PROLONGED STRESS. I MEAN, WHO OF US HASN'T EVER HAD A SOUL DRAINING CRY, WHERE YOU CRIED SO MUCH YOU JUST COULDN'T CRY ANYMORE? DAVID'S EYES ARE NOW WEAK FROM F=GRIEF, SWOLLEN, PUFFY, SORE EYES ARE THE RESULT OF PROLONGED TEARS.

THE LOSS OF SIGHTREMINDS US OF HOW SIN AND DISTRESS ALWAYS CAUSE US TO LOSE OUR DIRECTION IN LIFE. WHEN WE DO OUR EXAMINE OF CONSCIENCE EACH NIGHT BEFORE WE GO TO SLEEP, DO WE SHED TEARS (AT LEAST METAPHORICALLY) AS WE RECALL OUR SIN? WHEN WE EXPERIENCE THE LOVE AND FORGIVENESS OF GOD, DO WE MAKE IT A POINT TO RETURN

TO HIM WITH OFFERINGS OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE? OR DO WE GO ABOUT OUR MERRY WAY, ONLY TO REPEAT OUR BEHAVIORS ONCE MORE?

IN THE END, THE PSALMIST'S PATIENCE IS REWARDED: GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS HIS PRAYERS. BY THESE LAST FEW VERSES, HE HAS FOUND FORGIVENESS, HEALING AND PEACE WHICH HE HAS SOUGHT FOR SO LONG.

AND YET, I WONDER WHETHER THIS TRIUMPH OF GOODNESS IS BASED ON AN EVENT IN HIS LIFE, OR SIMPLY BASED ON THE GROWTH IN HIS FAITH?

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES. WHEN HE ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS IN THE WAY WE DESIRE, HE IS GIVING US A FORETASTE OF HEAVEN WHEN ALL OUR DESIRES WILL BE SATISFIED. WHEN HE DOESN'T ANSWER OUR PRAYERS AS WE DESIRE, HE GIVES US THE GRACE AND FAITH TO ACCEPT OUR SUFFERINGS AND FIND IN THEM UNITY IN CHRIST'S OWN SUFFERING.

THIS PSALM CALLS US TO EXAMINE OUR OWN TRUST IN GOD WHEN HE PROMISES IN CHRIST TO FORGIVE ME, SAVE ME, AND GUIDE ME THROUGH LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES. IT CHALLENGES US TO FIND STRENGTH IN OUR FAITH THAT WE MAY SEE GOD'S PRESENCE AND HEALING EVEN WHEN OUR EARTHLY SITUATION HAS NOT IMPROVED. MOST OF ALL IT REMINDS US TO CONFESS OUR SINS AND NOT BECOME ENSLAVED TO GUILT, BECAUSE WE KNOW AND EXPERIENCE OF THE LOVE AND TRUST OF GOD IN WHOM ALONE LIES OUR JOY AND PEACE. IN THE NAME OF JESUS. AMEN.