Reflection for April 17

By Forrest Wells

Lament

Sometimes only a Lament will do. Another 5 ½ weeks of this “Stay at Home Order?!” Grounded! No baseball! No fans in Lambeau Field?! No Sunday in-person worship and coffee fellowship with my Church Family? Continued separation from family in the nursing home or hospital. More job loss, income loss and uncertainty about the future. When will this Covid19 pandemic be over? When will the dying stop? Will it ever end? I just want life to be normal. Can’t you stop this God? Please just take us back to the way it was.

Sometimes only a Lament will do. Sorrow or grief fills our hearts and yearns for expression. Did you know that over 30 percent of the Book of Psalms are Laments? Deep, passionate expressions of corporate and personal grief are a part of the life story of the faithful in scripture. Psalm 42 was likely written during a time of exile when the people of Israel were separated from their homeland and their “normal” way of life. Verse 4 sums up the heart’s cry:

These things I remember as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.

It is human and ok to lament, to grieve. Even Jesus cried out a prayer of lament in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me.” I’m so glad that because Jesus walked through the valley of trial and sorrow, He knows what we are going through and walks with us even in our frustration and deep desperation.

These Biblical Laments were parts of relationship with God. They are prayers. When life is shattered all around us and we don’t know where to turn, we turn to God; we cry out to God. God is with us. May our Laments be cried out in trust and hope. Psalm 42 concludes with hope:

Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.
With all the turmoil whirling around us in response to the COVID-19 virus pandemic, many of us are caught up in anxiety and worry. Plus, in the church, we are working full time to make plans to care for others who are struggling, to change how we worship and offer connection virtually or through phone calls and emails, and we are caring for people we love in our own families and connections. We are inundated with emails and posts and calls and news giving us latest reports and ideas for ways to respond and mis-information and latest information about healthy protections. We wonder what will happen to our churches and finances. Many of us are overloaded and overwhelmed.

In the midst of all of this, there are people reaching out to make a difference, offering generous care to neighbors and community, posting positive life-giving reflections and being the best of who we can be as individuals and as communities of faith. Thank you for all you are doing. We are collecting your stories and ideas and posting them on our conference website. Send them in and also, let us know how we best can support you.

Each day through this time, we as your Wisconsin Cabinet, will be sending you an email with a brief devotion or prayer to provide you with a small bit of care. You each are held in and surrounded by our prayers in the spirit of Christ. Keep breathing. Keep safe. Know that we all rest in the grace and Spirit of God.

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