

April 16, 2022

Scripture

Lamentations 3:37-58

37 Who can command and have it done, if the Lord has not ordained it? 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? 39 Why should any who draw breath complain about the punishment of their sins?

40 Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD. 41 Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven. 42 We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven.

43 You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us, killing without pity; 44 you have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through. 45 You have made us filth and rubbish among the peoples.

46 All our enemies have opened their mouths against us; 47 panic and pitfall have come upon us, devastation and destruction. 48 My eyes flow with rivers of tears because of the destruction of my people.

49 My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, 50 until the LORD from heaven looks down and sees. 51 My eyes cause me grief at the fate of all the young women in my city.

52 Those who were my enemies without cause have hunted me like a bird; 53 they flung me alive into a pit and hurled stones on me; 54 water closed over my head; I said, "I am lost."

55 I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; 56 you heard my plea, "Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!" 57 You came near when I called on you; you said, "Do not fear!"

58 You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life.

Devotional

The Rev. Felicia Zamora '21

In Nicaragua, we use the verb *resignar* to mean giving up when a situation is entirely impossible to cure or fix. We usually use it when speaking about the loss of a loved one. This verb is embedded in comments we hear from church friends who say, "I know you are going through a painful process, but think about how Suzy is in heaven with Jesus. She is no longer suffering." It attempts to numb someone's pain and grief process using what we think are words of comfort but actually ignore how someone is feeling.

The Book of Lamentations takes place during the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The Prophet Jeremiah voices the pain and anguish of the Israelites in all five chapters.

In Lamentations 3, the Prophet does not hold back tears when saying, in paraphrase, “Lord, look at the destruction, look how our enemies are now making fun of us. I feel completely lost. Please help us.”

Even though the situation is out of control, and the Prophet could have quickly taken the *resignar* route, he still does not give up as he writes, “Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!” Lament is an act of openness in faith that cries out to God, praying with hope that our Creator will listen to us.

In our prayers to God, let us dispense with the notion that our Creator is only available during our joyful moments. Lament is part of our reality, and God has room for us to weep out our anguish.

Prayer

kneeling I pour out
father – your love I need . . .
hold me, I shudder
("Prayer Life," a haiku by David Meade)