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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

"Who can command and have it done, if the Lord has not ordained it?" The destruction described in Lamentations is horrific. Even more horrific is the thought that our God is responsible for such desolation and destruction . . . until we read these words through the lens of Holy Saturday.

Read the passage again. Imagine Jesus gasping its words. On the cross, Jesus experienced the terror and pain, the mocking and shame, the judgment and the despair described here. He bore our sins in his body, suffering both as a consequence of our sin, and in solidarity with all who suffer the effects of sin.

And so he grieves: "My eyes flow with rivers of tears because of the destruction of my people." And so he was cast down to the realm of the dead: "My enemies without cause have hunted me like a bird; they flung me alive into a pit." And so from that place of death—like Jonah in the belly of the fish—he offers a call for salvation: "I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit."

Prayer

God in heaven, our Father, we thank you that our Lord Jesus Christ knows the full depths of our suffering. Thank you that you heard his voice when he called from the pit. Raise us up with Him, that we may say with Christ, "You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life." Amen.