

## **Lent Devotional April 6, 2020**

### **Scripture**

Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12

*1 How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the provinces has become a vassal. 2 She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has no one to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. . . . 6 From daughter Zion has departed all her majesty. Her princes have become like stags that find no pasture; they fled without strength before the pursuer. 7 Jerusalem remembers, in the days of her affliction and wandering, all the precious things that were hers in days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was no one to help her, the foe looked on mocking over her downfall. 8 Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become a mockery; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans, and turns her face away. 9 Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; her downfall was appalling, with none to comfort her. "O LORD, look at my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!" 10 Enemies have stretched out their hands over all her precious things; she has even seen the nations invade her sanctuary, those whom you forbade to enter your congregation. 11 All her people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength. Look, O LORD, and see how worthless I have become. 12 Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the LORD inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.*

### **Devotional**

#### **The Rev. Keith C. Kaufold '07/'12, Creative Ministry (2015)**

More than 10 years ago, I moved into an urban area that once housed steel mills as far as the eye could see. The main avenue in town would feel electric with the bustle of people walking, shopping, and eating. But the electricity would stop flowing as the steel mills closed in 1986. As the sights and sounds from the steel mills died, so did the sights and sounds of the main avenue. Like the skeletons of enormous creatures, the empty steel mills and vacant storefronts and restaurants stood as reminders to passersby of what used to be.

The Holy City, Jerusalem, was thought to be the locale of the blessing of the Lord God of Israel. But because of the onslaught of the Babylonians, the city once full of life is, in Lamentations 1, personified and likened to a person who has suffered great loss due to death. To the author of Lamentations, the destruction experienced by the Southern Kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, was not merely a historical coincidence—it was punishment due to sin. Similarly to the gasping of steel mill workers as they looked at the abandoned mills and remembered what used to be, "Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and wandering, all the precious things that were hers in days of old" (v. 7). Brothers and sisters, ask yourselves and your congregations, "Are the 'glory days' of the past keeping us from facing the reality of the present?"

### **Prayer**

Lord, we confess that our sin is greater than ourselves. Our separation from you leaves our lives, our homes, and our communities abandoned. Jesus, you are the Light of the world, the hope of every city, the longing of every human heart. Holy Spirit, illumine our hearts to recognize what within us refuses your will in the present. Amen.