

REAL TALK

LAMENT

December 5/6, 2020

Psalm 77

Pastor Daniel Hahn

MESSAGE NOTES

As we pray the Psalms, we learn to celebrate and we learn to lament. We learn to be honest with God about our anger and our sin. We learn to grieve and doubt. We learn to admit shame and express gratitude. ... Repeatedly praying the Psalms allows us to come before God with emotional honesty, authenticity, and transparency.

John Calvin wrote that the Psalms are "the anatomy of all the parts of the soul." He goes on to say that there is no human emotion that "anyone find[s] in himself whose image is not reflected in this mirror. All the griefs, sorrows, fears, misgivings, hopes, cares, anxieties, in short all the disquieting emotions ... the Holy Spirit has here pictured exactly.

— Tish Harrison Warren, *The Psalms Dare Us to Bring Our Whole Selves Before God*, Christianity Today, (Nov 9, 2020)

Normally, life serves up its hurts, losses, betrayals and abandonments at a pace that allows time for recovery and restoration between episodes. Occasionally, however, these wounds come in such rapid succession or touch us too deeply to allow for effective recovery between onslaughts. ... This leads to despair, depression, irrational anger and a host of physical problems. — R. Loren Sandford

1. Be honest with God. He can handle it. (77:1 – 5)

How many of us have really experienced God in darkness? I'm not talking about nighttime darkness ... I'm talking about deep, dark, lonely places that somehow we have been pushed into, fallen into, deceived into, sinned into ... and found Him there, really there. Found that He's not afraid or embarrassed to be there with you nor is He loathe to rescue you from there (again!). He is with you — to redeem, accompany, guide, and hold fast safely while you stumble through this dark time. I am so often surprised to discover Him in places of struggle, confusion, unbearable waiting, in places of not understanding, in places of longing, in places of sin and even deep bondage.

— Pam Sider, *Blog post*

2. Think through the answers God HAS provided. (77:6 – 9)

- Has He rejected us? No!
- Will He ever again show us His faithfulness? Yes!
- Has His unfailing love vanished forever? No!
- Have His promises failed? No!
- Has He forgotten to be gracious? No!
- Has He totally run out of compassion? No!

3. Remember countless examples of God's goodness. (77:10 – 12)

4. Become aware of a bigger plan unfolding, beyond our immediate circumstances. (77:13 – 20)

If we ask the question: "Why does God allow evil and suffering to continue?" and we look at the cross of Jesus, we still do not know what the answer is. However, we now know what the answer isn't. It can't be that He doesn't love us. ... [The cross shows us] God takes our misery and suffering so seriously that He was willing to take it on Himself.

— Timothy Keller, *Kings Cross*

It doesn't matter how great the pressure is. What really matters is where the pressure lies, whether it comes between me and God or whether it presses me nearer His heart. — Hudson Taylor



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you share about a situation or a season in life that left you seriously despairing?
- Why do you think people are often hesitant to be honest about their disappointments in life — even their disappointments with God?
- Why would many people feel more comfortable complaining to a therapist than they would complaining to God?
- Was there one particular line or phrase in any of the Psalms we looked at that really resonated with you? Can you share why it felt meaningful?
- What are some of the ways people commonly mitigate their pain?
- In your experience, what helps you the most when you feel let down by life and people (including yourself)?
- Do you think people who experience more wealth and ease are ultimately better off? Why or why not? What informs your perspective on that?
- Are you able to identify ways God has brought blessing out of some of your greatest setbacks?
- What is one thought from this weekend that you'd like to hold on to as you head into this next week? How do you think that might help you deal with something you're facing right now?