

Lamentations 3: 25-36

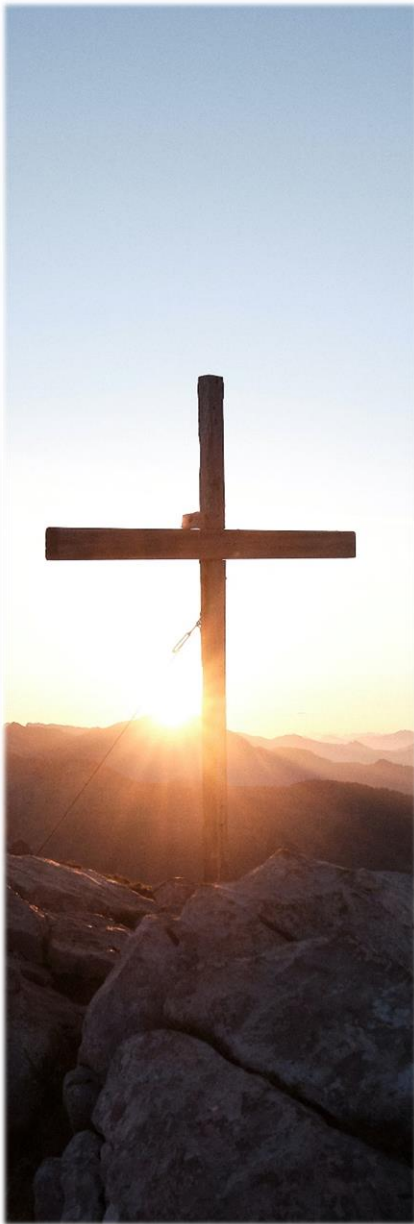


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Before you begin your reflection:

- Take a few slow deep breaths to help quieten your mind and leave the business of today to one side.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to help refresh and deepen your understanding of Scripture.

Read the passage:

²⁵The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;
²⁶it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
²⁷It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.
²⁸Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him.
²⁹Let him bury his face in the dust – there may yet be hope.
³⁰Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace.
³¹For no-one is cast off by the Lord for ever.
³²Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love.
³³For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone.
³⁴To crush underfoot all prisoners in the land,
³⁵to deny people their rights before the Most High,
³⁶to deprive them of justice – would not the Lord see such things?

Thoughts: It is considered that the Book of Lamentations was written by the Prophet Jeremiah. In this book, he presents 5 meditative poems, which pick up on the themes of his prophecy: the sinfulness of Israel, and the resulting desolation they face. Yet, tucked in the middle, in the 3rd poem, we have this vision of hope – a reminder that God does not bring hardship willingly (but will do so in response to our wrongdoing); and a promise that if we endure for His sake, He will never leave us, nor forsake us.

I was once reminded by someone that, although we believe in a God of Resurrection, He is also a God of death – for death must precede resurrection. He is a God who builds up, yes; but in order to build up His New Kingdom, He must first tear down. It's one of the reasons I am deeply uncomfortable when our only experience, in Holy Week, is Palm Sunday & Easter Sunday – it gives a false impression that it is all about celebration; in fact, right in the middle, there is the deep trauma of betrayal, defeat and death.

Lamentations, and Lent, remind us of this: that although we believe in hope, and expect resurrection; we must also contend with the reality that to get there, there will first be pain; not least the pain borne on the Cross by our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Some questions to consider:

1. How do you feel when confronted by the reality of pain, suffering and challenge? What prompts that feeling?
2. God promises hope and resurrection. Does that help you to trust Him when He allows you to experience hard times?
3. How can you better hold these two truths together: suffering and hope; tearing down and building up; death and resurrection?

Prayer:

LORD God, You tear down; allow hardship; permit death. Help me to trust You when I experience these things. Not least because you also build up; promise relief; and have guaranteed resurrection to all who believe in our Lord, Jesus Christ. Help me to better hold to and live these truths in my life; that I might persevere better in the present, and hope more firmly in the future. Amen.