

We Mourn: A Lament Service

Matthew 5:4; John 11

Background:

Our hearts are broken. We ache. We mourn. Over the past few weeks, the violence in our country causes us to mourn, especially with what happened at a school in Texas yesterday. As we discern how to follow Jesus on his way, he shares in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew that mourning is a part of his way. In fact, Jesus says we are blessed if we mourn. We are living right-side up if we mourn. This word for mourn is one of the strongest possible words for grief in the Greek language. This is a deep, piercing sorrow. This is to truly have a broken heart. We have broken hearts right now, and this beatitude gives us the freedom to grieve. As Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus, we weep over the deaths of so many innocent people, especially 19 children and 2 teachers. We mourn today.

Our world is groaning under the weight of its brokenness. Evil and sin are still very present in this world. Even though we, who belong to Jesus, can rejoice in the salvation he brings, there are also times of great sorrow. We, who belong to Jesus, have caught a glimpse of God's new world, and ache with all our being for that new world and break into tears when it is absent. We see more clearly the twisted-ness of our world and allow ourselves to feel the pain. We see the fallenness and cry out, "It doesn't have to be this way!" We mourn today.

But we don't stop there. Jesus says that the mourners will be comforted. When we authentically mourn the state of our broken world, the Holy Spirit comes alongside us and encourages us, reminding us that God's kingdom has invaded this world, has permeated this world and is in the process of transforming it. And nothing can stop it! This is our hope.

Please join us this Sunday as the pastoral staff has decided to do a lament service in light of these tragedies.

Sermon Text (ESV):

Matthew 5:4

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

John 11 (select verses)

1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles[b] from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man

came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Discussion Questions:

- Preparation
 - What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
 - What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- Sermon Questions
 - As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
 - In suffering and pain, this passage teaches us:
 - To orient ourselves towards Jesus
 - That it is Ok to share raw anger and unfiltered disappointment with Jesus
 - That Jesus is also angry and deeply moved, and sheds compassionate tears with us
 - How does / can this help you or someone you love?
 - Is there someone in your life who needs to know that they are not alone? How can you be with them and point them to Jesus?
 - Will you take time this week to pray for:
 - The families of those who have lost loved ones
 - Healing of visible and invisible wounds of the survivors
 - Teachers
 - Local, State, and National leaders
 - The Church's path / role amidst this suffering